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Dragon

ISSUE 336 · OCTOBER 2005

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HAUNTING THE MANSION

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ECOLOGY OF THE SPAWN OF KYUSS

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ISSUE 336 OCTOBER 2005

Dragon

VOL. XXX NUMBER 5

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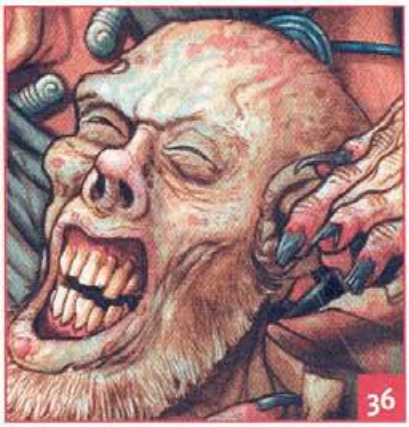

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Ravenloft
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• Includes Tarroka fortune-telling cards and Dikesha dice

FORBIDDEN LORE

I haven't been playing D&D since 1974. In fact, I wasn't even born until six years after the game's release. Instead, I discovered D&D another way, searching for what I shouldn't know.

Like all things worth having, my father kept his collection of worn paperbacks on a high shelf. Although only a few feet off the floor, for my nine-year-old stature they might as well have been locked away a mile up. Every now and then I'd get a glimpse, though. Covers of glowing swords, menacing figures, and titles I couldn't pronounce—in this early case usually incorporating the name "Shannara"—piqued my wonder at these tiny volumes, so different from those on my shelves. But I wasn't allowed to read these books—which, of course, only made me want to even more.

Curiosity about these forbidden tomes would eventually lead me to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, but not directly. Mythology, H. P. Lovecraft, and reports of ghosts and UFOs all served as stops, but eventually it was a friend's inherited collection of gaming books that most caught my attention. Sure Vampire was fun, but the morbidly designed black-bound books—some of which I knew my parents would never let me keep—possessed exactly the illicit attraction I'd so desired. The game didn't entertain my friends and me for long, however, leading us to relocate our adventures to the unfamiliar world detailed in a battered boxed-set. Although trying to play Vampire in the FORGOTTEN REALMS didn't work out terribly well, this first brush with D&D left me with a whole new world to explore and a vast, seemingly secret mythology that expanded with every sourcebook.

Ultimately—and quite appropriately—it was a boxed-set called *Forbidden Lore* that most satisfied my tastes; an accessory filled with advice to mislead and terrify, cryptic dice, and a mysterious tarokka deck, all for the darkest world in a game surrounded by taboo. This was exactly what I'd been looking for... and it had only taken me about a half dozen years of blind searching to find it.

I suspect that, like me, many D&D players actively seek out those things they weren't meant to know. I suppose that desire is implicit to playing a game largely about exploring dark places crawling with terrible things. In my nearly two years at DRAGON I've realized that exploring and piecing together the obscure and mysterious are two of the magazine's most important purposes. Sure the *Book of Vile Darkness* might tell you all about Orcus, but DRAGON reveals the secret of his truename, something no mere planeswalker or archmage would know (DRAGON #317). In one issue DRAGON reveals the Mesopotamian god Ninurta and later details the somehow-connected demon Pazuzu, raising questions about the latter's real word origins (DRAGON #329). This very issue explores some of the greatest pieces of D&D's forbidden lore, opening the pages of the blasphemous *Demonomicon* for the first time since *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*, while elsewhere hinting at the impending horrors of DUNGEON's mysterious Age of Worms.

Essentially, if the devil's in the details, its DRAGON's job to give them to you.

So go ahead and page through. Every time you'll find something you recognize, some weapon, spell, or monster you know—or at least thought you did. You'll also always find something new, ready to make your own. Yet every now and then, on the lines or sometimes between them, we'll tell you something that you most definitely didn't know... and just maybe weren't supposed to.

F. Wesley Schneider

F. Wesley Schneider
Assistant Editor

LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue. Send an email to **scalemail@paizo.com.** Please include your name, city, and state.

One Part Praise, Two Parts Complaint

There are two objectives I would like to complete in this letter. The first is to praise you. Then, unfortunately, I must criticize.

Firstly, I would like to tell you just how much I love your magazine. I didn't really realize the quality of the magazine until my aunt purchased a copy of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. No offense to the *Electronic Gaming* people, but the magazine was an embarrassment. It had tremendously dull-witted jokes that were very adult, and not suited for me to even read aloud to my little brother. Now, I wouldn't have minded the maturity, if not for the fact that the articles seemed to have been written by teenage boys in both their lack of intelligence and their covetous love of stupid, perverted punch lines. I started reading the magazine expecting to see DRAGON-quality articles and excellently portrayed information, but in that respect I was rudely duped.

Now that you have received your praise, you must receive your criticism. Firstly, I must ask you to consider your cover artwork before printing. While these full-color pieces of art are beautiful, issues such as #329 and #330 are issues I can't take to school and read because it may raise some questions. I love the pictures, do not misinterpret there, however, I also want to be able to show the magazine to inquiring people instead of hiding it away, awaiting a dark corner where no one will assume what I'm reading is revolting.

Secondly, I must ask you about issue #335, which, unfortunately, I find not to my liking. While I understand that the FORGOTTEN REALMS fans have long been requesting a part of the Magazine to be FR, I must ask why you had to print an entire issue of FORGOTTEN REALMS information. I, a person who doesn't use the FORGOTTEN REALMS, could possibly forage for a inspiration here and there, but I think that instead of printing whole issues for one setting, you could rather just print one FORGOTTEN REALMS, one EBERRON, and two general articles for everyone's use. That way everyone will be happy every issue.

Azual
Via Email

After trying at it for about five years at the helm of three different gaming magazines, I think it's pretty fair to say that no matter what, not everyone is going to be happy with every issue. Your point about #335 is well taken, however, and readers should not expect to see another issue so closely tied to a specific setting in the near future. We're toying with the possibility of always including one article for each of the currently supported campaign settings in every issue, however, and would be interested in hearing reader feedback on the idea.

Having a Blast with the Past

I have to give you guys credit. Every month there is something in this magazine somehow relevant to my campaign. This game I am currently running will take the characters to 30th level. While I have not gotten to H1, which I believe is *Bloodstone Pass*, I am plotting out the adventure and adding my personal twist and my own NPCs to it. I have a lot of work to do to convert it to third edition and raise the challenge level, but that is all part of the fun of DMing. Of course having read the "Blast from the Past" blurb in DRAGON #334, I will be removing the *Hand of Vecna*. Thanks for the heads up.

Dr. Dennis D. Harry
Via Email

Background Info

I'm sorry to write my first letter to DRAGON about a complaint, but you're doing something that really bothers me. I stopped buying *White Dwarf* magazine because their art editor insisted on putting background art behind every article, and this generated a lot of reader complaints, which the staff at *White Dwarf* dealt with by telling the subscribers to photo-copy the articles (not helpful!!!). In issue #330 of DRAGON you published an article on shadow elves that was so dark I was unable to read the black print. In this same issue you printed an article on jesters that had white printing on a dark blue background—good work. Since you can alleviate this contrast problem please do so, I'd hate to have to cancel my subs to DUNGEON as well as DRAGON simply because your art department has figured out a way to make these magazines unreadable to those of us with visual impairments—thank you.

Douglas James Berry
Lakeville, MA

We've become increasingly sensitive to this issue as more and more readers let us know about problems with the colored backgrounds, Douglas. Thanks for taking the time to write in and share your views. Going forward, we're trying to be as sensitive to these concerns as possible without making the magazine look too drab or boring. It's a

WEAR YOUR GAME FACE

Dragon Talk

It's October and you're planning on going out on the 31st as a ghost again. Change your plans.

Whether as a costume or the perfect prop for your next D&D session, the mad artists at Catalyst Studios have got just the thing to spark your next macabre escapade (**moritorium.com**). Several masks include actual dossiers of documents, including notes like "One page torn from Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's 1548 *De Deis Gentium*." For those with more elegant tastes or seeking seemingly more planar fare, Wendy Klein (**wendyklein.com**) offers leather and copper creations that really are works of art. As either decoration or disguise, add a bit of mystery to your next gaming session. *–Mike Felauher*

delicate balancing act, at times, but we'll try to make sure we always err on the side of the readers.

More Details, Please

In your "Living in the City" editorial (Dragon #334), you mentioned the campaign you ran that was set exclusively in the city, and every session was up to the players. To which I can only say—details, we want details! How do you arrange things so that players have enough choices, and you have enough information, that you can just dive in and start adventuring based on what the characters want?

Bill Trost
Aloha, Oregon

It's been several years since I ran a campaign this way, so I'm afraid some of the details have been long since forgotten. Key to the affair, however, was creating a ton of NPCs appropriate for the sorts of encounters that the D&D game itself requires of its world. I started, appropriately enough, by detailing the Greased Watermelon, an inn and tavern where the PCs would meet and eventually stay. Because I knew my large group would want more than just their home base, I created a few additional taverns, one for the seedy side of the city, one for the nobles, and so on. I followed this up with applying the same approach to temples. If the PCs needed healing, I had a place for them to go. Likewise if they needed research, potions and scrolls, and even magic that might be considered evil. I then added a few shops to cover the basics of things PCs might want to buy. The city (a heavily modified version of Dragonlance's Solanthus) boasted a handful of weapon shops, for example, and I devised rivalries between the proprietors that could be easily spun into plots of their own.

With this basic framework in place, I came up with a few major threats (a collapsing thieves guild, a massing evil army in the north that would ultimately raid and occupy the town, etc.) and tied a few of the PCs' backgrounds to these emerging threats. I kept notes about all this stuff on standard 3 × 5 index cards that I then alphabetized, so I was always ready for what my players threw at me.

The key, as always, was preparation. Once the game began, it was easy to tell what threads and locations interested the party, so I spent most of my time thinking up devious twists and turns related to those elements of the game. When one of my friends surprised me by walking off the script, I could always fall back on my index cards.

As for dungeon adventuring, we relied fairly heavily on published adventures and encounter tables from various D&D sources. I wouldn't run a game this way these days, but at the time we didn't take things quite so seriously, and everyone had a great time. To date, none of my campaigns have ever lasted as long, or been as well loved by the players.—Erik Mona

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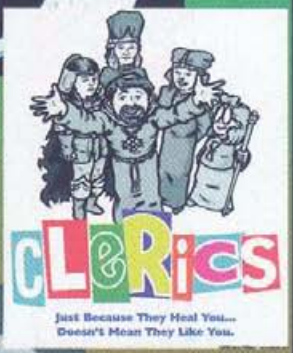

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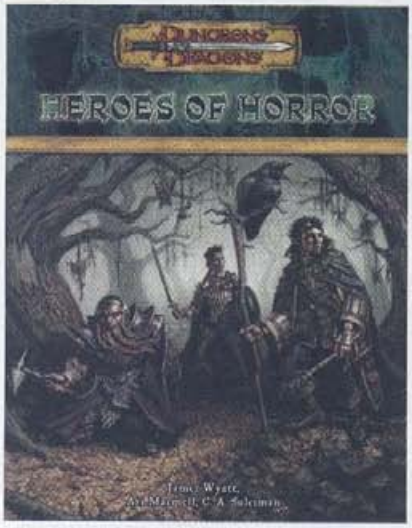
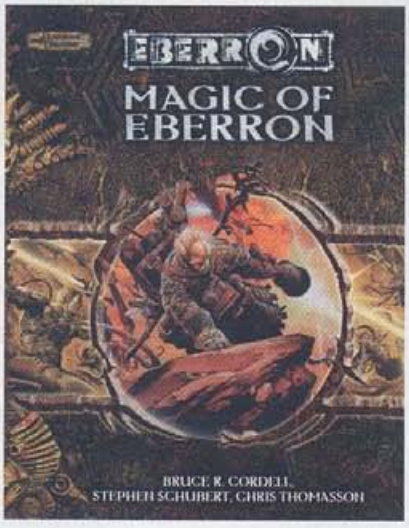
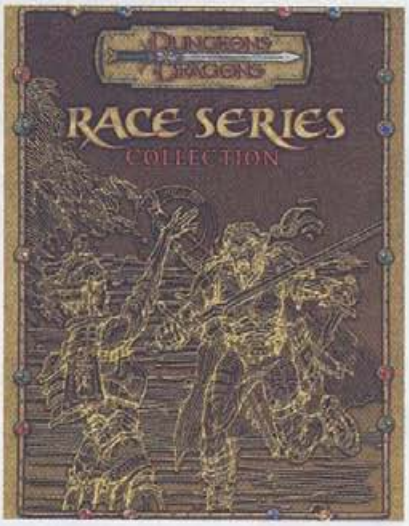


Terrify the players in your next campaign. *Heroes of Horror* is an entire sourcebook designed to help DMs introduce horror roleplaying into lone encounters, whole adventures, or as the focus of an entire setting. For example, the taint mechanic from *Oriental Adventures* has been expanded with rules for expressing it through physical, mental, and moral decay. Dreamscape adventuring also grants a perfect setting for a single episode or solo play. Written by veteran designer James Wyatt and newcomers Ari Marmell and C.A. Suleiman, check out *Heroes of Horror* and see what it takes to drive your players insane. –*S.B.*



Designers Bruce Cordell, Steven Schubert, and Chris Thomasson unleash more EBERRON arcana in this month's *Magic of EBERRON*. New artificer spells, dragonshard items, grafts, and wild new totem magic rituals make up merely a few of the additions found in this tome of mysteries. A new character race called the Breed, the blood magus base class, prestige classes (like the dragon prophet, elemental scion, and impure prince), new monsters, numerous symbionts and homunculi, and even some psionics also make *Magic of EBERRON* much more than just a book of spells. –*S.B.*



The leather bound *Special Edition DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* (v. 3.5 of course) looks sumptuous enough to make any DM feel special. Matching the *Special Edition Players Handbook*, it features gilt edges, embossing, and a handy ribbon bookmark. This edition contains all the latest errata compiled from **wizards.com** plus some corrections not found elsewhere. Also releasing this month is the *Races Series Gift Set*, packaging the complete set (*Races of Destiny*, *Races of Stone*, and *Races of the Wild*) inside one slip-covered box, giving you everything you need to know about all the core races of D&D and including a special 4-page D&D character sheet. –*S.B.*

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON # 337

Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Zuggtmoy

by James Jacobs

Released from the dungeons of the Temple of Elemental Evil, Zuggtmoy dreams of spreading her fungoid presence across the planes. Learn the terrible secrets of the demon lady of slimes and fungi.

Lords of Dust

by Keith Baker

Scheming through the centuries, these rakshasas and even greater fiends seek to free their masters bound deep below the surface of EBERRON. Get drawn into their world-spanning web of lies and plots.

Monsters of the Mind

by Kevin Baase, Eric Jansing, and Oliver Frank

Five horrible monsters that prey on your thoughts. Revisit old classics like the ustilagor and explore new horrors like the brainstealer dragon.

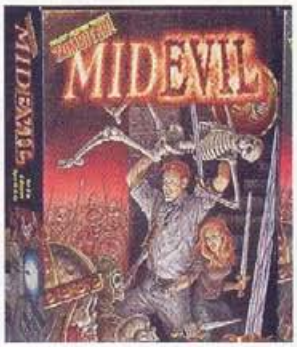
Plus!

The Ecology of the Shadar-Kai, Class Acts, Bazaar of the Bizarre, First Watch, Scale Mail, Sage Advice, Wormfood, and comics.

reported by Shelly Baur, Jason Bulmahn, Mike Fehlauer, Mike L. Fiegel, and James Sutter

THE DARKER SIDE OF CHICAGO

Since the release of *Chicago by Night*, thousands of World of Darkness gamers have set their chronicles in the Windy City. Now, this popular setting is being updated with the new *World of Darkness: Chicago* sourcebook, the first true crossover title for the new World of Darkness. This grim guidebook offers advice and ideas for Storytellers and players alike, with more than 100 pages devoted to each of the Vampire, Werewolf, and Mage lines. Also check out *Boston Unveiled* and *VII*, both available this month. Learn more at **white-wolf.com** –*M.L.F.*



HAIL TO THE KING, BABY

This month the gamesmiths at Twilight Creations (**twilightcreationsinc.com**), creators of the corpse-killing game *Zombies*, unleash their newest undead-slaying game, *MidEvil*. The themes should be familiar to Bruce Campbell fans, with *MidEvil* pitting your time-traveling character against an army of sword-swinging skeletons. New game elements include player vs. player combat and a morbid gear purchasing system. Like *Zombies*, *MidEvil*'s quick and violent game play makes it a great party game, and the handfuls of minis can be put to all sorts of uses. –*M.F.*

MIND YOUR MUTANTS

Released in 2002, *Mutants & Masterminds* won awards for Best d20 Game, Best Interior Art, and Best Graphic Design at the 2003 ENnies, and a version of its innovative damage system even ended up in *Unearthed Arcana*. Now Green Ronin presents *Mutants & Masterminds 2nd Edition*, updating and streamlining the game engine while retaining its fast play style. What can you expect? Easier character building, more archetypes, multi-ranked feats, new powers, and much more to help you create your perfect alter ego. For previews, visit **mutantsandmasterminds.com**. –*M.L.F.*

BORN TO BE WILDERLANDS

The first fantasy campaign setting ever fleshed-out in print is back with a vengeance. Judges Guild and Necromancer Games present the *Wilderlands of High Fantasy*, home of the infamous *City State of the Invincible Overlord*. This old-school boxed set brings you an overdose of epic high fantasy with 18 highly-detailed maps, two map books, new magic items and artifacts, more than 400 NPCs and monsters, details on more than 3,000 locations, and unique new "Judge's Only" tools, like new geography threats and encounter tables. For more information, visit **judgesguild.com**. –*M.L.F.*

Balor

VENTURE INTO THE UNDERDARK

Underdark, the eighth set of *Dungeon & Dragons Miniatures*, releases this November. Like previous sets, Underdark has 60 miniatures, some with epic stat cards for 500-point play, and 8 large uncommon miniatures with one in each box. But enough talking. Grab your Drizzt from Archfiends and get ready for a prepainted plastic showdown because this set features the infamous assassin Artemis Entreri. Drizzt might have a little help though, as a certain loyal panther companion is summoned in Underdark as well. Be sure to check out **wizards.com** for more sneak peeks of what's to come. –*J.B.*

Ankheg

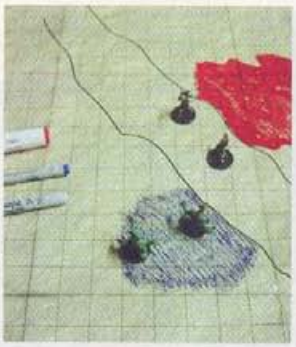
Artemis Entreri

TERROR IN THE CARDS

Forget brute strength—in *Horrific*, the character-based classic horror card game from Laughing Pan Productions (**laughingpan.com**), blatant force is both gauche and ineffective. Each of *Horrific*'s six "Terror in the Cards" decks are structured around B-horror-movie archetypes—like Vladimir the vampire, the beautiful but malevolent Doktor, and the terrifying Lord of Bones—as two or more players vie for control of a village. With a unique set of victory conditions for each character, every pairing creates a totally different game—just watch out for those torches and pitchforks! *–J.S.*

BACK IN BLACK... AND WHITE

Black or white? Good or evil? Lion or... cow? The groundbreaking *Black & White* introduced a new take on the highly indulgent but incredibly satisfying genre of deific simulations, and its sequel—aptly titled *Black & White 2*—has more in store. Take on the role of a god, with the world at your feet, spells cast by glyphs created with a swirl of the mouse, and an animal-like avatar at your command. Will you wow worshippers with magical miracles, enchant your enemies with dazzling developments, or lead a massive army into battle? Choose your fate at **lionhead.com/bw2**. *–M.L.F.*



TAKE IT TO THE MAT

"Dude, please tell me you used dry erase"—the phrase that's sent many a good battlemat to the dumpster. With Steel Sqwire's (**steelsqwire.com**) new Flip-Mat, however, DMs are free to use dry erase, wet erase, and even permanent markers to map out rooms and diagrams without damaging their mat. Featuring a grid of 1-inch squares and hexes on opposite sides, this 24" by 30" laminated cardstock mat folds up to the size of a sheet of notebook paper. Whether you're gaming on the go or just need a game mat that actually fits into a bag, check out the Flip-Mat and never accidentally ruin your gear again! *–J.S.*

OBJECTS D'ART

One of the largest private fantasy art collections in the world is about to go public. This month, Wizards of the Coast releases ten select pieces of MAGIC: THE GATHERING and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS artwork for sale to the public. Dubbed the "Limited Collection," this series includes masterpieces like Adam Rex's cover to *Player's Guide to Faerûn* and Wayne Reynolds's "Tiamat," among other favorites. Each piece is available as either one of 250 artist-signed canvas prints or a thousand numbered lithographs, sold exclusively at **wizards.com** with prices ranging from $50 to $300. *–J.S.*

DUNGEON THIS MONTH # 127

The Hall of Harsh Reflections

by Jason Bulmahn

The Free City: a shining gem of cultured civilization. Beneath the surface of this bustling metropolis a gang of infiltrators and an enigmatic mastermind plot the destruction of an intrepid band of heroes. An Age of Worms Adventure Path scenario for 7th-level characters.

Dungeon of the Crypt

by Eric L. Boyd

The High Hunt leaves the streets of Waterdeep and heads beneath the City of the Dead, where monstrous criminals compete for the favor of their mysterious master. A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 13th-level characters.

The Hive

by Phillip Larwood

Having joined the Hive, the once-dwarven wizard Hehranna seeks to convert the rest of her people, knowing they won't begrudge a few moments of pain in exchange for the industrious awakening she has to offer them. A D&D adventure for 5th-level characters.

MINIATURE MENACES

Action figures have come a long way since GI Joe and his kung-fu grip. This month SOTA Toys (**sotatoys.com**) hits the sweet spot for ubergeeks with their *Now Playing* line of cult movie "heroes, villains, creatures, monsters, and madmen," with Meg Mucklebones and the Lord of Darkness from *Legend*, Baron Harkonnen from *Dune*, and *The Thing* boxed set featuring MacReady versus the Dog Thing. But if the Thing doesn't satisfy your need for tentacled creatures not of this world, SOTA's revolting *Nightmares of Lovecraft* should more than provide. Featuring Great Cthulhu, a Lovecraftian ghoul, and Father Dagon himself, these cube-menacing models should be available just in time for Christmas. *–M.F.*

WHERE EVIL SLEEPS

Dwarven Forge, maker of the renowned *Master Maze* dungeon environments, releases their limited-edition *Den of Evil* demonic dungeon set this month. The numbered, hand-painted set includes nine passage pieces, twenty-nine room pieces, and three doors, each cast in durable polystone with felt bottoms. Capable of thousands of different combinations, it's the perfect environment for a gothic boss-level, evil temple, or alien ship interior. Highlights of the set include working lifting doorways and dozens of eerie portal and demon sculptures.

Only 1,500 Den of Evil sets will be produced, and they will only be available via the Dwarven Forge website (**dwarvenforge.com**). *–M.L.F.*

HERE THERE BE MONSTERS

Whether you're tired of cookie-cutter miniatures games or simply need a creepy gothic mini for something your players have never seen before, Privateer's *Warmachine* and *Iron Kingdoms* lines come chock-full of lovingly detailed steam-punk goodness. Drop the monstrous Boneswarm or Lich Lord Terminus in the middle of your battlemat and watch PCs trample each other out the door. Add in sets like the accursed pirates of the Revenant Crew of the Atramentous, the darkly-alluring Witch Coven, or the famed Alexia Ciannor, villainess of the popular Witchfire Trilogy adventure, and you'll quickly see why Privateer (**privateerpress.com**) prides itself first and foremost as an artist's company. *–J.S.*

RPGA UPDATE

by Ian Richards - RPGA Program Manager

As I mentioned last time, November 5th is this year's Worldwide Dungeons & Dragons Game Day. On that day, fine retail locations everywhere will be giving away special prizes at a variety of D&D and D&D Minis events, including special D&D Campaign Cards and new promotional D&D miniatures. Also, check out **dndgameday.com** to see how you can write the next great RPGA adventure!

This year's Game Day kit also includes several large color maps from the deadly new *Fane of the Drow*. So if you're afraid of the dark or hate spiders, make a date to join the fun this November 5th at a store near you!

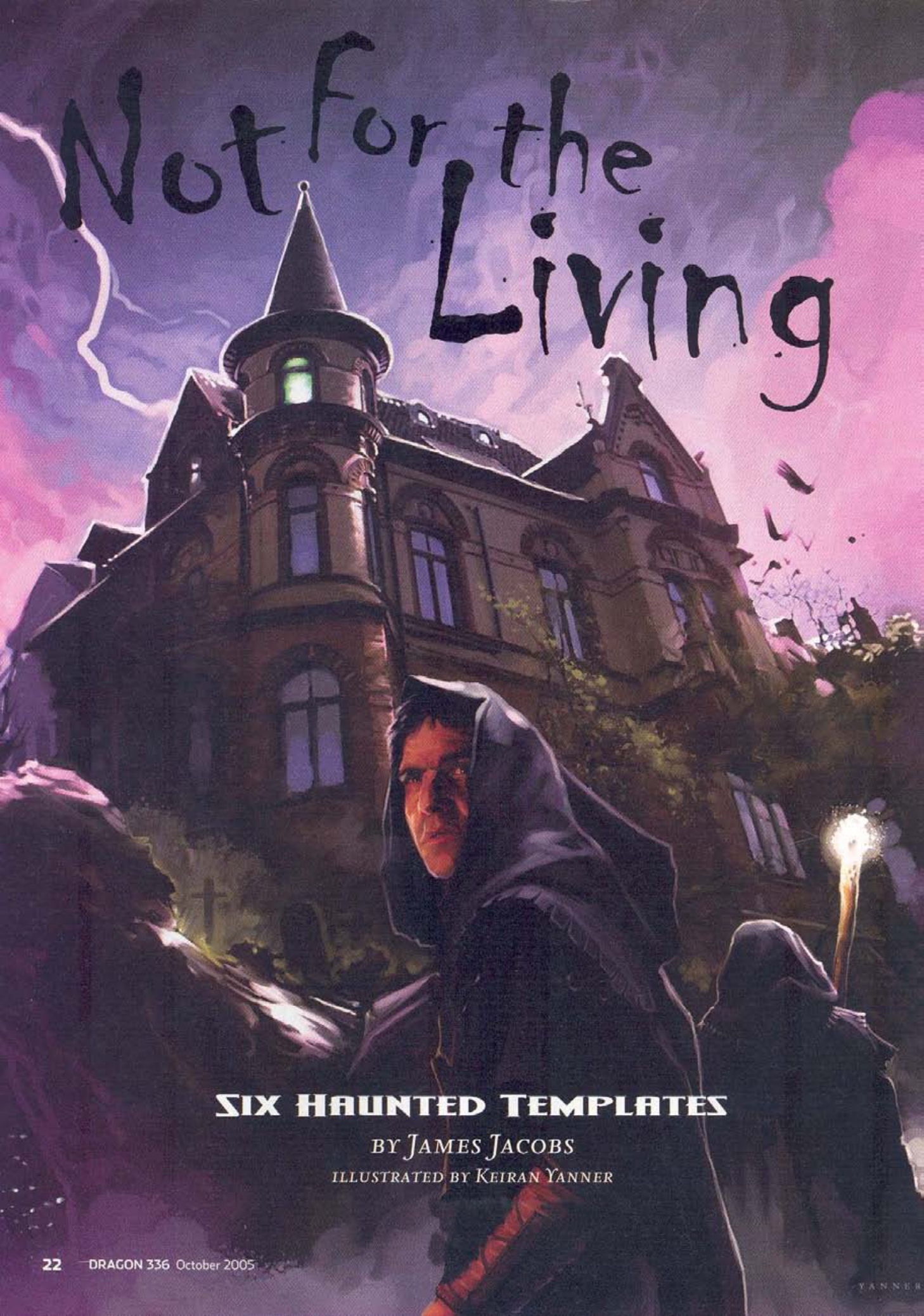
Our intrepid band of Origins 2005 RPGA judges, ready for battle!

RPGA members of all ages got a chance to roll the dice at Origins 2005.

Origins 2005

Everyone here at the RPGA would like to take a moment to thank all our members, players, and especially our stalwart GMs who helped make Origins 2005 such a fantastic success! We couldn't have done it without all of you and look forward to doing it again in 2006!

Not for the Living



Six Haunted Templates

BY JAMES JACOBS

ILLUSTRATED BY KEIRAN YANNER

There are places in the world in which the living are not welcome. These places are infused with hatred and spite. It's one thing to face a vengeful ghost in combat, but what happens when that ghost is augmented by something more? What is the truth behind the old sinister house on the hill, and why is it no one has lived there for years? What is the source of the childish laughter that echoes in the halls of the abandoned orphanage built over the ruined foundation of Thrushwallow Asylum? Why do the plants in the darkest part of Scarwood grow so thick, and why do birds in flight veer away from this primordial region?

This article presents six different "templates" you can apply to locations in your D&D game to model various types of hauntings. Each haunting has a specific flavor and tone, but apart from that they can be applied to any location you can think of: ancient tombs, castles, ships, that creepy old mansion at the edge of town, or even a tavern or home that one of your PCs just recently purchased.

Although hauntings are generated by restless spirits or influences from other planes, they are not themselves creatures. They are more accurately categorized as complex hazards or traps. Some hauntings (such as eidolons or entities) are closely tied to specific ghosts, but the ghost and the haunting itself remain separate. Destroy a ghost, and the haunting remains and might eventually revive the ghost in question. Destroy a haunting, and its ghost remains to plague the region (although without the support of the haunting's features), and given time that ghost's constant presence might cause the haunting to manifest again.

Haunting Magnitude

Hauntings are measured in magnitudes. A haunting's magnitude is typically a number between 1 and 20; hauntings with magnitudes above 20 are extraordinarily rare. This number is independent of the haunting's type. You can create a magnitude 1 planar canker just as legitimately as you can create a magnitude 20 entity haunting.

A cleric can attempt to suppress most hauntings for a time by making a turn undead check. Treat the haunting as a single undead creature with Hit Dice equal to its magnitude. With a success, the haunting is rendered inert for 1 minute. If the roll is good enough to destroy the haunting, it is rendered inert for a day. Hauntings cannot be completely exorcised by turning checks. Clerics who channel negative energy can suppress a haunting in the same manner, although if they roll well enough to command the haunting they can instead opt to render the haunting harmless to themselves and anyone they designate while leaving it in effect to hinder their enemies within the haunting's reach.

Often, a haunting must make a magnitude check. This is simply a d20 roll modified by the haunting's current magnitude.

A haunting's magnitude sets several factors:

Caster Level: The caster level of a haunting's magical effects (as well as its effective Hit Dice) is equal to its magnitude.

Saving Throw DCs: When a haunting's magical attack allows a saving throw to negate or reduce its effects, the DC for the save is equal to 10 + the haunting's magnitude.

Attack Rolls: Hauntings that can make physical or magical attacks do so with a bonus equal to their magnitude. Some haunting types gain bonuses on their attack rolls.

Saving Throws: A haunting (or any structure within its reach) has saving throw modifiers equal to its magnitude.

Types of Hauntings

This article presents six different types of hauntings, each associated with an archetypical source and theme. These are:

Bad Place: A location that has seen so much torment and cruelty that it is haunted by dozens or more restless spirits.

Dreamscape: A haunting that can manifest itself only through the dreams of those who sleep nearby.

Eidolon: A haunting that manifests through words, mirrors, paintings, works of art, and similar mediums.

Entity: A haunting powered by a single restless spirit whose long unrest has infused the surroundings.

Planar Canker: A haunting that arises from proximity to alien realms beyond the ken of most sane creatures.

Primeval Scar: A place where remnants of ancient life still hold sway.

Reading the Entries

Each haunting template is organized in the following format.

The entry starts with a section that provides details on how the haunting comes to be and where it typically manifests.

Reach: How far-reaching the haunting's effects are. Characters beyond this range might be able to observe some of the haunting's manifestations, but they cannot be affected directly by them. Likewise, the haunting's effects on living and undead creatures are limited to this range.

Structural Effects: This section details how the haunting changes the physical qualities of the location it is bound to. Many hauntings have the ability to make physical attacks or use spells. In a combat situation, a haunting's initiative check is a straight 1d20 roll; no modifiers apply. Hauntings may take one action per round (exceptions are noted in the text).

Living Effects: Hauntings often have specific effects on living creatures that enter their reach, or upon creatures that die therein.

Undead Effects: The undead are particularly influenced by hauntings, and often receive special benefits (or even penalties) when in a haunting's reach. In addition, this section details a new special ability (if any) that ghosts encountered within the haunting might have.

Associated Monsters: Hauntings attract monsters. Most of these are undead, but other creatures are drawn to these sites as well. This section provides a short list of creatures that are associated with the haunting.

Exorcism: Hauntings can be removed or defeated, but the means to defeat them are different for each haunting. Many hauntings can be exorcised by a *dispel evil* spell. When *dispel evil* is used in this manner, the caster must succeed at a caster level check opposed by the haunting's magnitude.

Bad Place

"[The room] was smaller than the others, a cramped cell whose bare walls streamed with moisture, and it smelled as though its contents had been kept locked away for many years. Perhaps whatever was imprisoned here had died there, because she could see it crouched in the farthest corner, its withered limbs clenched like a dead spider's legs around its ragged scrawny torso, its blackened twigs of fingers digging into its cheekbones as though it had torn all the flesh off them. Nevertheless those fingers moved to greet her fall. They unstuck themselves from either side of the yawning grimace revealed by the shriveled flesh, and reached blindly for her."

Nazareth Hill
—Ramsey Campbell

The bad place might have started as another type of haunting, but over the years the number of lives and minds lost within its reach grew enormous. The bad place built upon itself to create a region completely suffused with malignancy and hatred. A bad place might spring into being on the site of a great massacre, an ancient graveyard, or any other site where numerous lives were lost or minds were shattered. It could even be a location with dwellers who have been allowed, for too long, to continue their cruel and wicked ways. A bad place lies dormant until a living creature intrudes upon its reach. A wizard might select a spire of rock as the site for the school he wishes to found, not knowing that hundreds of years before a tribe of cannibalistic barbarians were slaughtered there. Not long after the wizard builds his school and accepts his students, the bad place awakens to claim new victims.

Bad places are usually large structures that house numerous tenants. Mansions, castles, prisons, asylums, schools, temples, and orphanages are classic locations for bad places to manifest.

Bad place hauntings are more difficult to affect with turning checks, and have +6 turn resistance as a result.

Reach: Central structure and attending grounds. A bad place can be any size, although larger ones tend to have more established and intricate histories.

Structural Effects: A bad place haunting can change the appearance of any structure in its reach through the use of a *major image* spell, up to a number of times per day equal to its magnitude. Typically, the bad place uses this ability to either disorient living creatures, to trick them into exploring dangerous areas in its reach, or to display some event that took place in the past. Bad place hauntings with a magnitude of at least 7 can target a creature with a *phantasmal killer* spell once per day. Bad place hauntings with a magnitude of at least 17 can cast *weird* once per day.

All bad places have a "heart"—a central location where the energies of the spirits that power it are focused. The bad place's heart is usually in an underground chamber below the structure it haunts, but it might also be hidden in a secret room or a secluded section of attic. Rarely, the bad place's heart is plainly visible, such as a disturbing painting in the manor's foyer or the gallows within a prison's inner courtyard. Identifying a bad place is simple with *true seeing* or *detect evil*. The bad place's heart writhes and coils with wrathful spirits when viewed with *true seeing*, and radiates evil as a magic item with a caster level equal to its magnitude.

Living Effects: The bad place despises intelligent living creatures and seeks to destroy any that dare intrude upon its reach. When no living creatures can be found in its reach, a bad place goes dormant after 1d10 days. Mindless creatures and those with Intelligence scores of 2 or less do not concern a bad place. If a creature with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher enters its reach, the bad place slowly awakens. This process takes 4d6 days, but can sometimes take much longer if the bad place has been dormant for an unusually long time.

When the bad place wakes, all living creatures within its reach must make a Will save (DC 10 + magnitude) every day. Failure results in 1d4 points of Wisdom drain. Once a bad place drains an intelligent creature to 0 Wisdom, that creature's alignment switches to chaotic evil and it becomes a murderous pawn of the bad place. The creature does not become comatose as a result of its Wisdom drain, and for all effects modified by Wisdom it now uses its Charisma score instead. As long as the creature remains a pawn of the bad place, it seeks to kill any other intelligent creatures it encounters who are not under the bad place's control. A pawn forced beyond the bad place's

reach immediately falls prone. Procedures for rescuing someone who has fallen to a bad place are given under Exorcism.

Undead Effects: Incorporeal undead gain fast healing equal to 1/2 the bad place's magnitude while they are in its reach and turn resistance +4. This increases their CR by +1. Bad place ghosts always possess the malevolence special attack, and may also possess the following special attack:

Shape of Terror (Su): Up to 3 times per day, a manifested ghost may change its shape as a free action, momentarily transforming into the most feared object or creature of any one target within 30 feet. If the ghost makes a successful touch attack against that creature during this round, the creature must make a Fortitude save or drop dead from fright. Success indicates the victim merely takes 3d6 points of damage. This is a mind-affecting necromantic fear effect.

Associated Monsters: Often, the spirits of a bad place manifest as a specific type of incorporeal undead, such as allips, shadows, specters, or wraiths. These undead are dormant when the bad place is dormant, becoming mobile only after the bad place is awakened. Even then, these spirits tend to hide and wait in the bad place's heart, content to let it work its way into the minds of those who have intruded upon it.

Vermin, animals, and magical beasts with an Intelligence score of 2 or lower are often found living in a bad place. These creatures are always unusually large (advanced by several Hit Dice) and cantankerous, and do not suffer intruders into their territory.

Exorcism: Utterly destroying all of the buildings in the bad place's reach has a chance of exorcising the site, but if the bad place makes a DC 15 magnitude check it survives and can infect any new structure built on the site. *Dispel evil* is useless unless it is cast upon the bad place's heart, in which case a successful casting exorcises the haunting for good.

Those poor souls who are captured by a bad place can be restored to their senses by first restoring their Wisdom scores to their original values and then casting *atonement* on them. Failure to cast an *atonement* means that the victim immediately drops to 0 Wisdom (and becomes a pawn again) the next time he fails to resist the bad place's call.

Dreamscape

"He was lying in his blankets, staring tensely through the dim door and across the shadowy hall, to where a beam of moonlight fell across the balustraded stair, some seven steps up from the landing. And there was something on the stair, a bent, misshapen, shadowy thing that never moved fully into the beam of light. But a dim yellow blur

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that might have been a face was turned toward him, as if something crouched on the stair, regarding him and his companion. Fright crept chilly through his veins, and it was then that he awoke—if indeed he had been asleep."

"Pigeons from Hell"
—Robert E. Howard

The dreamscape is a relatively simple haunting that typically influences a fairly small building or only a few rooms in a larger building. To outward observation, a dreamscape looks unremarkable.

Dreamscapes manifest when a single being of great imagination or creative talent dies an unexpected or accidental death. They rarely manifest as the result of deliberate violence like murder—such deaths of artistic folk more often result in eidolon hauntings. This, however, does not lessen the terrifying nature of the dreamscape in the slightest.

Rarely, a dreamscape can come into being in an area where a powerful mind spent much of its time, even though the source of that mind might still be living. Stories are told of eccentric scholars or arcanists who unknowingly succumb to dreamscapes of their own unconscious making.

Reach: 10 square feet/magnitude.

Structural Effects: None.

Living Effects: Any intelligent living creature that falls asleep in a dreamscape must make a Will save (DC 10 + magnitude). Success indicates the victim wakes with vague memories of disturbing dreams. Failure indicates that the victim suffers the effects of a *nightmare* spell.

A living creature slain by these nightmares suffers the same fate in the real world. For example, a nightmare of being murdered by an axe-wielding maniac results in the victim's body being mutilated in the same manner. A creature slain in this manner rises as a zombie 1d6 rounds after its death.

Undead Effects: Zombies in a dreamscape's reach gain damage reduction 10/—; this increases their CR by +1. Ghosts in a dreamscape sometimes possess the following special attack:

Nightmare Vision (Su): As a standard action, this ghost can invade the mind of one living opponent within 30 feet. A target of this effect immediately falls into a nightmare-haunted sleep unless it succeeds at a Will save. This sleep persists for 1d10 rounds, during which the victim tosses and turns and cries out. When the duration of the effect passes, the victim wakes with a scream and must make a Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. A victim wakened before the effect passes suffers a –4 penalty on his Fortitude save. This is a mind-affecting fear and sleep effect.

Associated Monsters: The region around a dreamscape is often plagued with zombies created from those who have fallen victim to the haunting. Evil priests and necromancers often make their lairs in or near dreamscapes so they can capitalize on this effect to augment their undead legions.

Exorcism: In order to exorcise a dreamscape, one must first use a dreaming creature as bait to lure the haunting into the physical world. As soon as the dreaming creature is targeted by the dreamscape, a successful *dispel evil* cast upon the dreamer can exorcise the haunting if the dreamer succeeds at its save against the dreamscape *nightmare*.

Eidolon

"The edge of the screen turned black, darkness gradually encroaching in a ring on the center. Dark and light were clearly defined now. At the center of the screen, a small round moon of light floated in the middle of the darkness. There was a man's face in the moon. A fist-sized clump of something fell from the

moon, making a dull thud. Another, and then another. With each sound, the image jumped and swayed. The sound of flesh being smashed, and then true darkness. Even then, a pulse remained. Blood still circulated, throbbing. The scene went on and on. A darkness that seemed as if it would never end. Then, just as at the beginning, words faded into view. The writing in the first scene had been crude, like that of a child just learning to write, but this was somewhat better. White letters, drifting into view and then fading, read: 'Those who have viewed these images are fated to die at this exact hour one week from now. If you do not wish to die, you must follow these instructions exactly...'"

Ring
—Koji Suzuki

Eidolons are hauntings that aren't tied to a static location. They are similar to dreamscapes in that they manifest from the unquiet spirit of an artist or other truly gifted individual. Yet unlike dreamscapes, eidolons come about as the result of violence. The eidolon spirit burns with an unyielding need for vengeance against its killer or to have its tragic tale spread. The worst eidolons have no such focus—they blame the world for their doom, and want nothing more than vengeance against all things living.

The eidolon seeks living creatures as the medium for its vengeance, infusing works of art, mirrors, written words, and similar media that living creatures are drawn to. Often, it chooses a single person to serve as its tool, forcing the victim into doing its will out of fear.

Reach: A number of objects (typically scrolls, books, mirrors, works of art, or similar media) up to the haunting's magnitude. These objects must be within 100 feet of each other when the eidolon first manifests, but they can be separated by any distance from each other thereafter. An eidolon can affect any creature that studies any of these focus objects.

Structural Effects: None.

Living Effects: An eidolon's most horrific power is the ability to inflict potent compulsions on those who study or investigate any of the foci it has infused with its energies. Any creature that examines a book, views a mirror, or otherwise observes the work of art the eidolon has chosen must immediately make a Will save (DC 10 + magnitude). Success indicates the victim feels uneasy but otherwise escapes unharmed. He must save again if he studies the object again.

Failure indicates that the eidolon has infiltrated the victim's psyche. The victim typically experiences a vivid but disjointed hallucination in which he relives key moments of the eidolon's life, culminating in its death. These hallucinations are usually cloaked in symbolism and metaphor, and might not initially make sense to the victim. When the victim emerges from the hallucination (which typically lasts 2d6 rounds, during which time a *dispel evil* spell can disrupt the hallucination), he has become affected by a *geas/quest* to perform a set series of tasks for the eidolon. The nature of these tasks varies from eidolon to eidolon, but they invariably require evil acts.

Undead Effects: Each separate focus connected to an eidolon can manifest a ghost when it needs to mete out punishment or otherwise affect the physical world. These ghosts are typically similar in shape and abilities, but aren't necessarily identical. An eidolon can be defeated when its ghosts manifest, so it resorts to manifesting a ghost only when it feels assured of victory or when there's no other choice. Eidolon ghosts always have the horrific appearance special attack, and many of them have the following special attack as well:

Aura of Curses (Su): Any creature that comes within 30 feet of the ghost must make a Will save or become cursed, as if by the *bestow curse* spell. Unlike the standard *bestow curse*, this effect has a duration of 1 day per Hit Die of the ghost. A single creature can only be targeted by this ability once per day, whether or not the save succeeds.

Associated Monsters: Eidolons can appear anywhere, and as such are not typically associated with specific creatures other than ghosts.

Exorcism: There are two ways to exorcise an eidolon. The first method requires all of its constituent foci to be confronted. By forcing the eidolon to manifest a ghost out of each of these foci (either by damaging the foci or successfully turning it) and then defeating the ghosts, the eidolon itself can be defeated. This is a daunting task, especially for high-magnitude eidolons, since the power of each of the individual ghosts does not diminish as others are slain.

Alternatively, if a character can "set right" the events that caused the eidolon to form in the first place, the remaining ghosts are appeased and leave the physical world, taking their foci with them. The exact conditions to be met to appease an eidolon should be fairly obscure and complex, and likely require communication with the haunting at some point.

Entity

"But after all, the attic was not the most terrible part of the house. It was the dank, humid cellar which somehow exerted the strongest repulsion on us, even though it was wholly above ground on the street side, with only a thin door and window-pierced brick wall to separate it from the busy sidewalk. We scarcely knew whether to haunt it in spectral fascination, or to shun it for the sake of our souls and our sanity. For one thing, the bad odour of the house was strongest there; and for another thing, we did not like the white fungous growths which occasionally sprang up in rainy summer weather from the hard earth floor. Those fungi,

grotesquely like the vegetation in the yard outside, were truly horrible in their outlines; detestable parodies of toadstools and Indian pipes, whose like we had never seen in any other situation. They rotted quickly, and at one stage became slightly phosphorescent; so that nocturnal passers-by sometimes spoke of witch-fires glowing behind the broken panes of the foetor-spreading windows."

"The Shunned House"
—H. P. Lovecraft

The most common type of haunting is the entity. All entity hauntings are the result of a single ghost that has existed in an area for many years. Only those that persist in an area for at least 100 years can generate an entity haunting. An entity haunting is in many ways a "shadow" cast by the ghost. The force of its will and personality so infuse its haunt that the area changes, physically and spiritually, to match that of the ghost.

An entity haunting's magnitude is equal to the associated ghost's CR.

Reach: 30-foot radius/magnitude.

Structural Effects: An entity haunting changes the appearance and nature of any structures in its reach in subtle ways to match the nature of the haunting ghost. For example, the ghost of a man who died by drowning might generate a haunting with walls stained by water damage and floors with mysterious puddles, while the ghost of a woman killed by a swarm of spiders might generate a haunting infested with spiders and clogged with cobwebs. These changes are the most obvious in the location where the haunting's associated ghost met its end.

Like a bad place haunting, an entity haunting can change the appearance of anything in its reach with a *major image* spell, but only once per day. Typically, the entity haunting does so to display something associated with the ghost's past—it might restore a mansion's nursery to full repair, or it might grant a vision of the ghost's murder.

An entity haunting may cast *cause fear* once per day, while one with a magnitude of at least 7 can cast *fear* once per day. An entity haunting with a magnitude of at least 13 can cast *finger of death* once per day.

Living Effects: Fear effects are more potent within the reach of an entity haunting; creatures in its reach suffer a –4 penalty against fear effects.

Undead Effects: Undead within an entity haunting's reach gain turn resistance +2. This turn resistance stacks with any existing turn resistance.

If you have access to *Libris Mortis*, most ghosts that have spawned entity hauntings are also augmented by the evolved undead template. Ghosts associated with an entity haunting always have the malevolence special attack, and often gain the following special ability as well:

Animate Objects (Su): A ghost may use its malevolence ability to possess inanimate objects. Doing so transforms that object into an animated object. Destroying the animated object does not harm the ghost. This effect functions as *animate objects* with a caster level equal to the ghost's Hit Dice.

Associated Monsters: Entity hauntings often have lesser undead such as ghouls, shadows, wights, and wraiths lurking nearby; these creatures are drawn more by the haunting's aura (and turn resistance boost) than by the presence of the associated ghost. If the haunting's ghost was killed by a particular type of creature, it's not unusual to find those creatures lurking somewhere within the haunting's reach after having been drawn to the region by the powerful psychic lure of the ghost's anguish and rage.

Exorcism: In order to exorcise an entity haunting, one must first destroy the haunting's associated ghost. Once this is done, a successful *dispel evil* cast anywhere within the haunting's reach can exorcise the haunting.

Planar Canker

"The door to the bedroom and the door to the hall had begun to collapse downward, widening in the middle and becoming doorways for beings possessed of unhallowed shapes. The light began to grow bright and hot, filling the room with that yellow-orange glow. Now he could see rips in the wallpaper, black pores that quickly grew to become mouths. The floor sank into a concave arc and now he could hear it coming, the dweller in the room beyond the room, the thing in the walls, the owner of the buzzing voice."

"1408"
—**Stephen King**

Not all hauntings are the results of uneasy spirits or vengeful ghosts. Some arise from entirely different sources. Planar cankers occur when something erodes or damages the boundaries between the Material Plane and an inimical other plane, such as the Abyss or the Far Realm. In the reach of a planar canker, reality itself grows unstable, and things that dwell in distant realms can see through into the world and often come to hunt. Even when no alien entities lurk nearby, the effects on the environs within the canker's reach create dangerous instabilities in reality. Living creatures exposed to a planar canker quickly go mad, and as they do, their eroding sanity fuels the canker and allows it to manifest dangerous physical changes to the environs. Planar cankers are rare and also quite small. A planar canker can exist with ease in nearly any area, and might only taint a single room in an otherwise normal tavern. Sealing the door to a room infected with a planar canker is an effective way to contain the danger, since without intelligent living creatures to interact with, the canker remains dormant and harmless.

Turning checks have no effect on manifestations created by a planar canker.

Reach: One room, up to 5-foot radius/magnitude.

Structural Effects: The planar canker has the most dramatic structural effects of the hauntings presented here. These effects manifest as the animation and transformation of physical objects within the room tainted by the canker, and are powered by the eroding sanity of those within its reach.

A planar canker drains Wisdom (see "Living Effects" below). Once it has drained 3 points of Wisdom, it can cause minor changes in the physical quality of objects in its reach by casting *silent image* once per round. When it has drained 6 points of Wisdom, the canker can cast *major image* once per round. Once a canker drains 10 points of Wisdom, it can begin animating objects in

the room. When an object animates, it becomes twisted, warped, and horrific in nature. Objects animate as if by an *animate objects* spell, but gain fast healing equal to 1/2 the planar canker's magnitude and an increase of +6 to their Dexterity score. These enhancements increase the object's CR by +1.

These structural effects persist until a creature manifests (see Associated Creatures) or until all living things in the room are dead, at which point the haunting loses 1 point of drained Wisdom per round and the room eventually returns to normal. Animated objects cannot leave the haunting's reach, and if forced out of its reach immediately revert to normal objects.

Living Effects: Planar cankers disorient living creatures within their reach. Once every minute, such creatures must make Will saves (DC 10 + magnitude) or take 1 point of Wisdom drain as their grip on reality slowly begins to erode and madness sets in. This drained Wisdom "fuels" the canker and allows for progressively more potent structural effects (as detailed above).

Undead Effects: None. Ghosts are not typically associated with planar cankers.

Associated Monsters: While the breakdown of reality caused by a planar canker's structural effects can be deadly, the true danger associated with planar cankers is that they represent places where the boundaries between the Material Plane and the intruding plane have grown unstable. Every minute a living creature remains within the reach of a planar canker there is a 2% cumulative chance that some entity on the other side takes notice. When this occurs, the structural effects become more pronounced as the approach of the creature from beyond forces reality to writhe and shift. During this time, animated objects in the haunting's reach become affected by *haste* (caster level equal to the planar canker's magnitude) and gain a +4 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws.

When the creature from beyond arrives, it can use the planar canker as a gate to physically appear in the Material Plane for 2d6 rounds before it is forced to retreat back to its source plane, after which point the planar canker is "burnt out" for 1d6 days. Any creature grappled by an outsider when it returns to its source plane must make a Will save or be transported to the source plane with the outsider. The nature of the creature that comes through the canker is left to you to determine; some good choices include chaos beasts, evil outsiders, or creatures from the Far Realm (see DRAGON #330).

Exorcism: A planar canker can be "burnt out" for 1d6 days with a successful *dispel chaos* spell. A *hallow* spell with a *dispel chaos* woven into its casting can extend this duration to a year. Permanently exorcising a planar canker requires the use of powerful magic like *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

More Inspiration

The hauntings detailed in this article were inspired by a wide range of short stories and novels about ghosts. The authors quoted have written several inspiring ghost stories, and if you plan on incorporating haunted houses or similar elements into your game you should track down their work for inspiration.

Movies are also an excellent source of inspiration for games revolving around hauntings. Some specific movies you might want to check out for specific inspiration include the following:

Bad Places: *The Fog, The Haunting, Poltergeist, Session 9, The Shining*
Dreamscapes: *Nightmare on Elm Street, Prince of Darkness*
Eidolons: *The Red Violin, The Ring*
Entities: *Below, The Changeling, Christine, The Others*
Planar Cankers: *Evil Dead, Ghostbusters, Hellraiser*
Primeval Scars: *The Blair Witch Project, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Uzumaki*

For more rules on how to handle a haunting, make sure to check out the haunting presences variant rules presented on page 6 of Libris Mortis.

Primeval Scar

"The loneliness of the place had entered our very bones, and silence seemed natural, for after a bit the sound of our voices became a trifle unreal and forced; whispering would have been the fitting mode of communication, I felt, and the human voice, always rather absurd amid the roar of the elements, now carried with it something almost illegitimate. It was like talking out loud in church, or in some place where it was not lawful, perhaps not quite safe, to be overheard."

"The Willows"
—Algernon Blackwood

Some beliefs maintain that the world itself is a living organism, that the trees, lakes, mountains, and the stone and soil itself possess spirits of their own. This idea is not completely without merit, and the existence of the unsettling hauntings known as primeval scars lend credence to such beliefs. A primeval scar is a region haunted by the unquiet and hateful spirits of the land itself.

Sometimes manifesting in areas where civilization has taken over and replaced the natural order, primeval scars are more often found in remote wilderness areas. Of course, the truth is that these regions have remained remote and uncivilized because of the presence of a primeval scar, for these hauntings are invariably the oldest of the old.

Within a primeval scar, creatures of the modern age might feel a strange sense of being unwelcome, of being an intruder

in a place best left unseen or unexplored. A DC 20 Sense Motive check is enough to notice this sensation. The deeper one travels into a primeval scar or the longer one remains in the region, the more powerful the sensation becomes. Intruders who stay too long in the reach of this haunting are invariably doomed—if not by the malevolent creatures drawn to such regions, then by the region itself. Given time, a primeval scar can swallow entire structures into the void.

Reach: 1-mile radius/magnitude.

Structural Effects: No artificial structure can last within the reach of a primeval scar. A structure created in such a scar has a cumulative 1% chance with each passing day of being absorbed by the scar. Someone who witnesses the absorption of a structure sees it simply fade away from view. Creatures and objects within a structure that vanishes can make a Reflex save (DC 10 + magnitude) to avoid vanishing as well (as detailed below under living effects).

Vegetation within the reach of a primeval scar seems "off." A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that the plants in such an area seem strange in some way; perhaps they grow where they should not, or maybe they seem to twist and writhe as if in a gentle breeze despite the utter stillness of the wind.

Living Effects: Animals in a primeval scar behave strangely. They are unnaturally aggressive toward intruders and typically attack on sight. Wild empathy checks made against native animals take a penalty equal to the primeval scar's magnitude. If observed in secrecy, these animals act strangely, such as arranging their kills in neat piles, eating soil or rocks, sleeping standing up, or dwelling in environs unsuited for their physiology. Animals not native to a scar (such as animal companions or pets) must make a Will save each hour they spend in the scar to avoid becoming shaken.

Intruders into a primeval scar face two primary dangers. First, all Survival checks in the scar are penalized by an amount equal to the haunting's magnitude; the scar actively resists presenting a welcome face to intruders.

More dreadful, though, is the possibility of being swallowed up by the primeval scar. Each day an intruder remains in the scar, he must make a Will save (DC equals the magnitude, +1 per previous check). Failure indicates that the victim simply vanishes. These vanishings always take place when no one else is looking; they can occur in the blink of an the eye, if required. This vanishing is a teleportation effect, so a creature under the effect of *dimensional anchor* or a similar effect is protected from vanishing. A creature that vanishes can be restored only via a *miracle* or *wish*, and even then, the creature returns with its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores drained to 0; *restoration*, *greater restoration*, or *heal* is required to cure this damage. Creatures that return from vanishing have no memories of their time away. Where things go when they vanish into a primeval scar is a great mystery. Some believe that they are transported back in time to the unknowable past, while others think that they are actually transformed into additional natural features or animals. The most disturbing theories hold that vanished creatures simply cease to be; they have no memories of where they have been if they are rescued simply because they did not exist while they were gone.

Evil aligned fey, native animals, and ghosts are immune to these effects and can dwell in the reach of a primeval scar indefinitely without fear of vanishing.

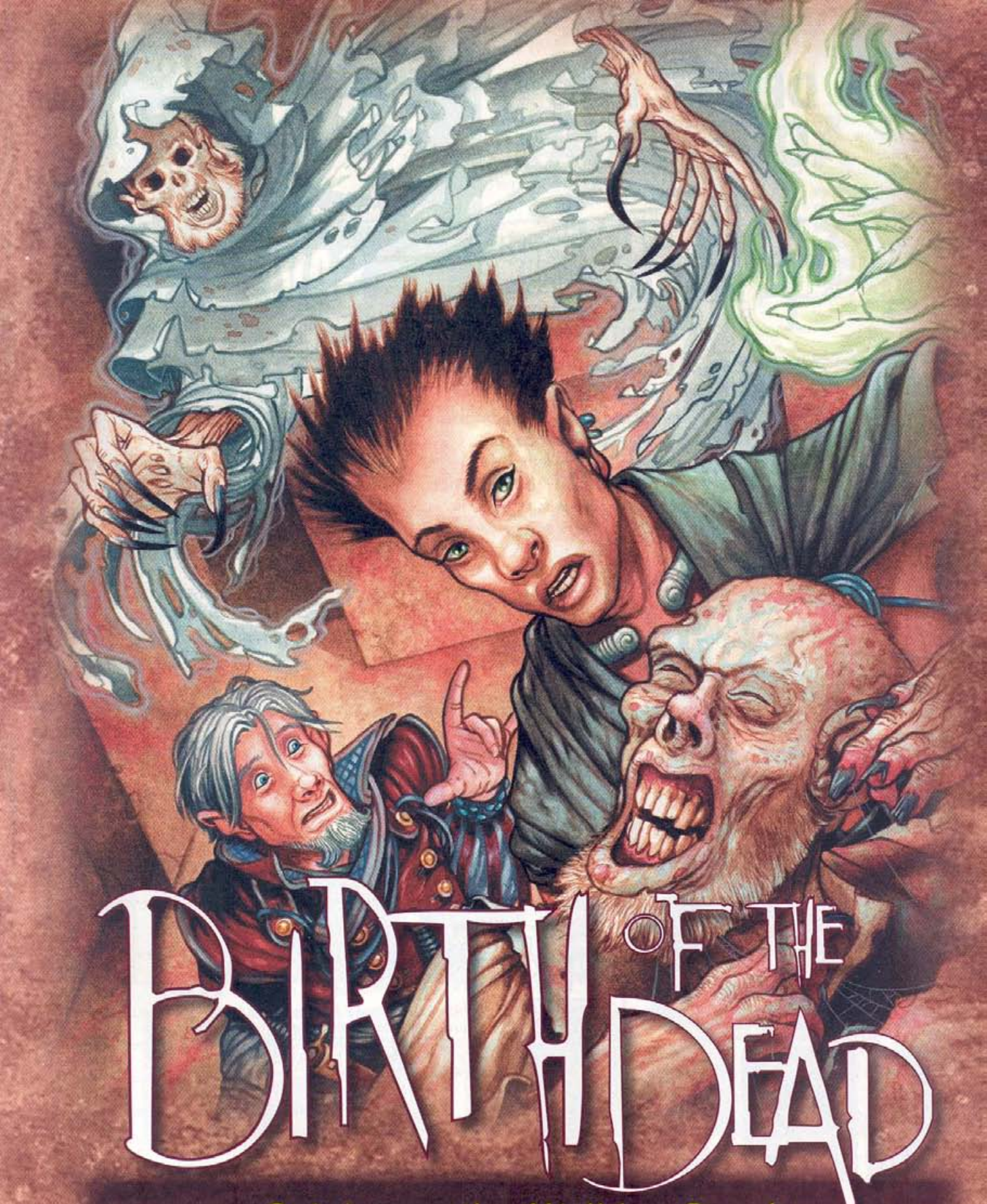
Artificial objects left untended in a primeval scar vanish as if they were living creatures. Because nonmagical items always fail their saving throws, any nonmagical items left untended for a day automatically vanish. This includes bodies of once-living creatures left in the area for more than a day. Magic items receive a Will save as normal.

Undead Effects: Primeval scar ghosts are usually created when a creature wanders into the haunting's reach, becomes lost, and dies (either from starvation, thirst, animal attack, or exposure) before it vanishes. When the body invariably vanishes the day after death, the soul lingers on, bound to the region as a guardian. These ghosts often have the following unique special ability:

Empty Soul (Su): If the ghost manages to possess a creature with its malevolence, it can attempt to cause the creature to vanish as a free action, up to once per round. The creature can resist the vanishing with a successful Will save. Success forces the possessing ghost to flee the body, but failure indicates that the body vanishes (see above) and the ghost gains a +4 profane bonus to its Charisma score for the next hour.

Associated Monsters: Animals and plant monsters are common in a primeval scar, as are the ghosts of those who die within the scar. Most other creatures avoid primeval scars, although it's possible to encounter any creature within a scar that has recently become lost within. Since evil aligned fey (such as the *Fiend Folio's* kelpie and wendigo) are immune to the vanishing effects of a primeval scare, they often use these hauntings as lairs.

Exorcism: Primeval scars are the most potent and dangerous of the six hauntings presented here. They have existed for countless eons, and their exorcism is beyond the reach of mortal magic. Certain artifacts or the will of a deity might be able to exorcise a region of this haunting, at the DM's discretion.



BIRTH OF THE DEAD

Origins of the Walking Dead

BY ARI MARMELL • *ILLUSTRATED BY JEFF LAUBENSTEIN*

Dungeons & Dragons boasts an astounding number of undead, some from ancient myth, others from the fiendish imaginations of the game's creators. It can be difficult, however, to justify so many different varieties in a campaign world. Unlike other monster types, undead do not procreate in the traditional sense. They are created either through necromancy or some terrible deed. It's fairly easy to imagine how a wight, ghoul, or ghost might arise, but what could cause a body to rise as a nightwalker? A boneclaw? A devourer?

This article offers a brief look at most of the undead from the *Monster Manual* (omitting only skeletons and zombies, mindless undead who exist only as puppets), and a selection of undead from other bestiaries. Each entry covers what conditions generally lead to the creation of that particular undead, as well as mentioning the traditional methods (such as through an attack and by spell). Although the deities mentioned below are specific to the core D&D setting, they are easily replaced with comparable gods in Eberron, the Forgotten Realms, or any other campaign.

Allip

Tezra sobbed silently as the rusty razor slid across her wrist. It rasped as it cut, but at least the sound drowned out the voices. It was only a momentary respite. She felt her life drain slowly from her wrist and she knew as she stared up at a ceiling that the voices would never trouble her again.

Then she was looking not up at the ceiling, but down at her bloodless, tear-streaked face. Tezra floated up and back, through the walls of her tiny home, her sobs turning to manic laughter none would ever hear. She would no longer suffer from the voices. She had become one.

It's no wonder that undead are often cruel, for undeath itself seems to possess an innate sadistic streak. How else to explain that those who have arguably suffered most should find their agony prolonged even after their last attempt to end it? The allip is the spirit of someone driven to suicide by madness, yet even death cannot quiet the madness that afflicts it. Some suggest that the allip is not truly hostile at all, but simply cannot understand that it only harms those to whom it reaches out for help in its lingering, lifeless confusion.

Suicide need not be the individual's conscious goal, so long as it can be directly attributed to the insanity. For instance, someone who jumps from a tower out of depression qualifies, but so does a madman who perishes after gouging out his own eyes in order to escape his hallucinations. Further, someone found shortly after death and offered a respectful burial is not likely to become an allip; only those who lie unfound for days or longer seem to linger as undead. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 10.

Bodak

"There are experiences worse than confronting demons," Jozan whispered to the tombstone by which he knelt. Only a date and name was carved upon it: Regdar.

"Like what, Jozan?" the soft voice of his elven companion asked from behind him.

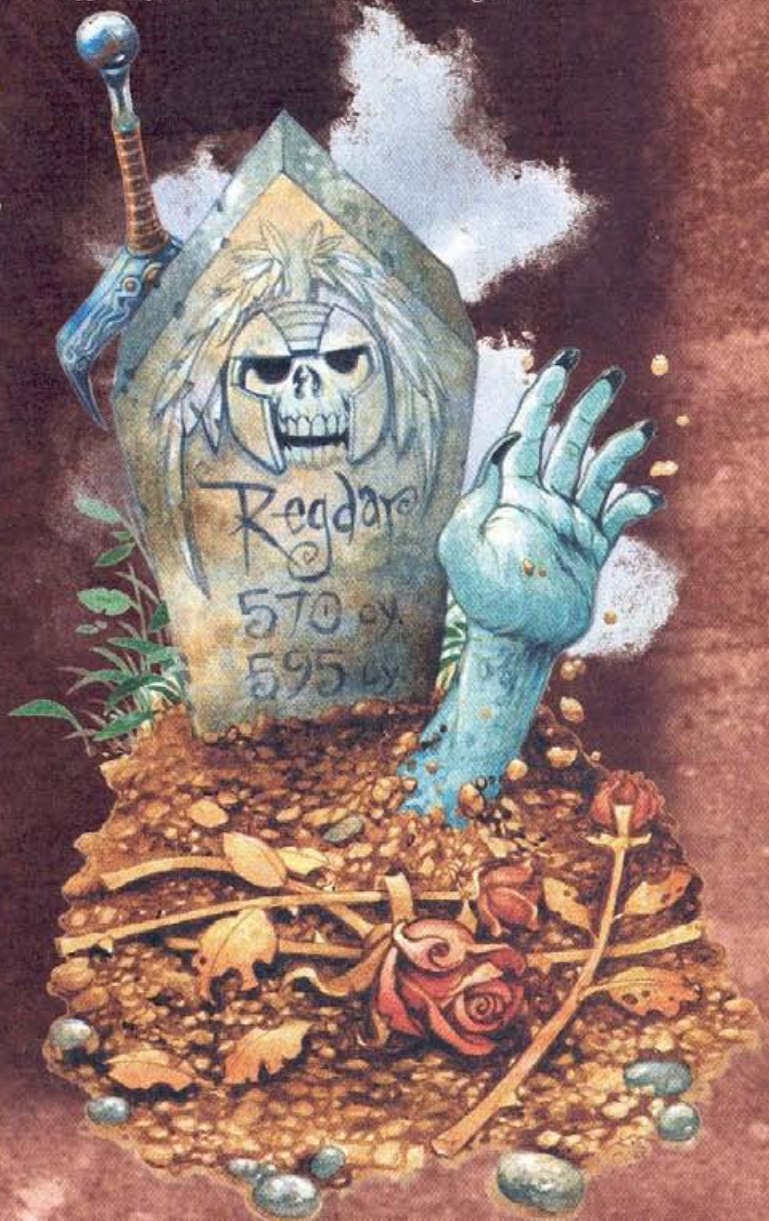
"Burying your friends afterward." The cleric stood, and sadly brushed the dirt from his knees. "Come, Mialee. It may not be very priestly, but I could use an ale or six."

The pair turned to leave, unaware of the subtle shifting of the dirt behind them, the faint scratching that heralded the rising of the body beneath the earth.

Oh, there were worse experiences than confronting demons, all right. Such as confronting the friends you thought you'd buried.

Bodaks are "the undead remnants of humanoids who have been destroyed by the touch of absolute evil." Typically this means that bodaks are created by other bodaks through their death gaze, but other methods exist as well.

More than just undead, bodaks are slightly fiendish as well. A bodak might rise when an outsider with the evil subtype slays a humanoid creature with negative



energy, a necromantic spell, or a death effect. The responsible fiend gains no control over the bodak, but few fiends take objection to unleashing yet another uncontrolled evil upon the world. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 28.

Bone Naga

"Is this something we're going to have to worry about?" Regdar asked, pointing to the serpentine skeleton draped over the altar. He glanced down toward the fresher corpse at his feet and scowled. "We barely beat a living naga. I don't want to face an undead one."

"I think not," Naull told him, examining the ancient runes carved into the chamber's walls. "I'm no necromancer, but I know something about death magic. There's no way this naga was strong enough to cast the necessary spells."

As if in response, the skeletal monstrosity raised its head with a sepulchral rattle.

Bone nagas are created from, and usually by, other nagas (most frequently dark nagas). Dark nagas know of a ritual to create a bone naga using *animate dead*. The ritual requires numerous components, including the ocular fluids of a divine caster and a sentient reptile. These can come from the same creature, if appropriate. Only taught to dark nagas, this rite contains a number of special somatic components that humanoids cannot emulate.

It is rumored that some free-willed bone nagas also possess the ability to perform the creation ritual and actively seek out their living brethren, enslaving them in undeath. Source: *Monster Manual II*, page 35.

Boneclaw

Ember struggled against the spell that held her, but to no avail. To have entrapped her so completely the spellcaster must be powerful indeed, for her body and mind were trained to shrug off such magics.

She could see little of the chamber. The walls flashed red in the light of a nearby fire, and she could see the legs and lower torso of the fiendish hag she had just slain.

"I should thank you, noble warrior." The voice behind her was cold, lifeless. "You have brought to me everything I need. I could not have done this without you."

A small horde of tiny creatures—wererats, Ember realized—scurried into sight and set about stripping the flesh from the hag in long strips, their bright knives glinting in the firelight. When they set about stripping Ember's flesh from her, beginning with her hands—hands that could shatter stone—Ember couldn't even scream.

Created as an immortal weapon, only the most abominable rituals birth boneclaws. The rite calls for the skeletons of Large, magic-using, humanoid-shaped creatures (such as ogre magi and certain types of hags). It infuses them with negative energy, strips them of most of their remaining flesh, and grafts additional bones to their body—mostly around the fingers. These additional bones must be cut from the flesh of living victims.

This rite requires the spells *create undead* (caster level 15+) and *greater magic fang*. Druidic magic is essential to the ritual, making boneclaws exceptionally rare even compared to other created undead. Source: *Monster Manual III*, page 17.

Charnel Hound

In a wave of destruction, dirt erupted from a hundred graves and then a hundred more. From each crawled the corpse that dwelt within, propelled by a malignant will. Naked skulls and fleshy visages seemed to gape open in horror as they dragged themselves in a mockery of infancy. Where they met their joints shattered and their bones clenched to one another. In the mass of writhing decay, a dog-shaped figure began to form.

The first charnel hound formed from the corpses of one particular cemetery, located behind a secret shrine to Nerull the Reaper. Seeing the horrific beast in action, necromancers determined to develop charnel hounds of their own. Early tests resulted in uncontrollable horrors (to say nothing of the deaths of many of the experimenters), but sadly, they finally succeeded. No longer the province of deities alone, mortal spellcasters have unlocked the secrets to charnel hound creation.

The ritual requires 200 corpses, the spell *create greater undead* (caster level 20+), and unholy unguents worth 15,000 gp (in addition to the standard components of the spell).

On occasion, charnel hounds arise without a mortal creator, spawned by the vile will of a deity even as the first such horror was created by Nerull. Source: *Monster Manual III*, page 26

Crawling Head

"This is different," Gimble muttered to Hennet, holding his torch high to stare at the strange icons carved into the wall. "Up to this point, it's all about mummification. We've seen that before, but look here!"

The sorcerer looked. The walls displayed primitive pictographs, but there could be no mistaking what they were meant to convey. Priests stood around a figure chained to an enormous slab. Scattered about him were the remains of numerous smaller beings. The chained figure thrashed while two priests stuffed strange items into his mouth and a third stood by fingering a saw-bladed axe.

"What in the name of all the hells were they doing here?" Gimble asked.

"I don't know," Hennet told him, "but whatever it was, it happened beyond this next door."

The first crawling head was created deliberately years ago, constructed from the severed head of a hill giant by a necromancer later slain by his own creation. Since then, giant necromancers have adopted the practice of creating crawling heads, although some humanoids still do so as well. The rite requires *create undead* and the sacrifice of a giant who just fed on at least three sentient beings.

Unfortunately, crawling heads are notoriously free-willed. Every day, at sunset, there is a 1% chance of the head breaking free of its creator's control. Once lost, control can never be restored and the crawling head likely attempts to destroy its creator. Source: *Fiend Folio*, page 35.

Crimson Death

Lord Varvain shrieked as the stake penetrated flesh and cracked ribs. So great was the agony, he actually prayed that this one would kill him.

It did not. It slid through the vampire's torso and into the cypress on which he hung, missing his heart by inches—as had the previous stakes that even now held him aloft.

"You swore you would spare me." The voice was hollow and emotionless. It echoed from a swirling mist, pink-tinged, that might once have been the face of a beautiful woman. "Then you swore you would change me, to be as you are. You should have kept your promise."

"Please..." The great vampire lord, scourge of a dozen villages for half as many decades, could only whimper. "Kill me..."

Varvain shrieked once more as the stake punctured his stomach, nailing him ever more tightly to the tree.

"Perhaps tomorrow, my 'lord.' First, I think you should watch me feed."

Legends tell that a crimson death is born from the destruction of a strong-willed vampire. This is not, in fact, the case. Crimson deaths might form from anyone who dies via exsanguination and whose body is then consumed or destroyed. A traveler in a marsh sucked dry by leeches and then consumed by other swamp creatures might rise as a crimson death. Similarly, a vampire who drains a victim and then cremates the body to prevent it from rising as another vampire might provoke the manifestation of a crimson death. The same hatred and iron will required to create ghosts or wraiths is necessary for the formation of a crimson death. They favor swamps and other misty regions due to their ability to easily hide in such environments, and not due to any necrological aspects of their condition. Source: *Monster Manual II*, page 53.

Death Knight

"Foul Lord of Brine, Ravager of Worlds, hear the call of your faithful, degenerate servant." He knelt before the two-faced idol, its twin tentacles on either side of his head. His black armor weighed heavy upon him, and he could hardly hear his own prayer for the sounds of battle. He heard Alhandra's voice and knew he could not defeat both the paladin and her companions.

Yet although he prayed, great Demogorgon sent no sign.

With a shout of rage, he sent the idol skittering across the floor with the back of his fist and rose to fight his final battle. He knew not, as he stormed from the chamber, that the Prince of Demons had not abandoned him at all. No, Demogorgon had great plans for him—he just needed to die first.

Great warriors in life, most death knights are favored servants of evil, but some served the forces of good as paladins, tragically fallen from grace not long before dying. Most served archfiends, as opposed to evil deities, and in fact the demon prince Demogorgon is credited with creating the first such horror. Some warriors seek out the undead existence of the death knight, but a mortal cannot perform the ritual without assistance. The transformation requires the active assistance of a powerful fiend. On rare occasions, death knights occur spontaneously upon the death of a favored servant of an archfiend or evil deity. Finally, and even less frequently, death knights might arise as the result of a curse. If an innocent dies due to a fallen paladin's actions, that individual might pronounce a dying curse that results in eternal unlife for the former champion of light. Source: *Monster Manual II*, page 207.

Devourer

Hennet did not know how long it had been since the thing that lurked in the endless Astral Plane had attacked him and Naull. He knew only it must have been a long time, because he was hungry. Oh, so hungry.

He looked down at Naull, felt her soul screaming from within him, screaming at him by name. He knew he should feel bad about what he'd done, but he couldn't remember why. He only knew that he was grateful to have found her, although already he wondered where he might find his next meal.

While devourers can be created deliberately by spellcasters using *create greater undead*, this is not the only way they manifest. If a humanoid traveling on the Astral Planer or Ethereal Plane is slain by a negative energy effect, she might rise again as a devourer. The combination of negative energies and the ambient forces of those planes combine into a mystic aura unlike any other, causing the body to warp and grow. The devourer becomes a permanent conduit to the Astral or Ethereal Plane, which constantly siphons off the negative energy animating it. Due to this effect the devourer starves if it does not absorb the lives of others. The deceased's physical body becomes the devourer, so the undead appears on the Astral or Ethereal Plane if the individual physically traveled there, but if projecting her Astral form, her physical body—and thus the resulting devourer—remains on the Material Plane. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 58.

Drowned

"Please, you have the cargo! There's no need to do this! Please!"

Allaris, unable to tell where his tears ended and the ocean spray began, cringed

against the cold metal of the anchor as the bearded pirate leaned over him, grinning a gold-toothed grin.

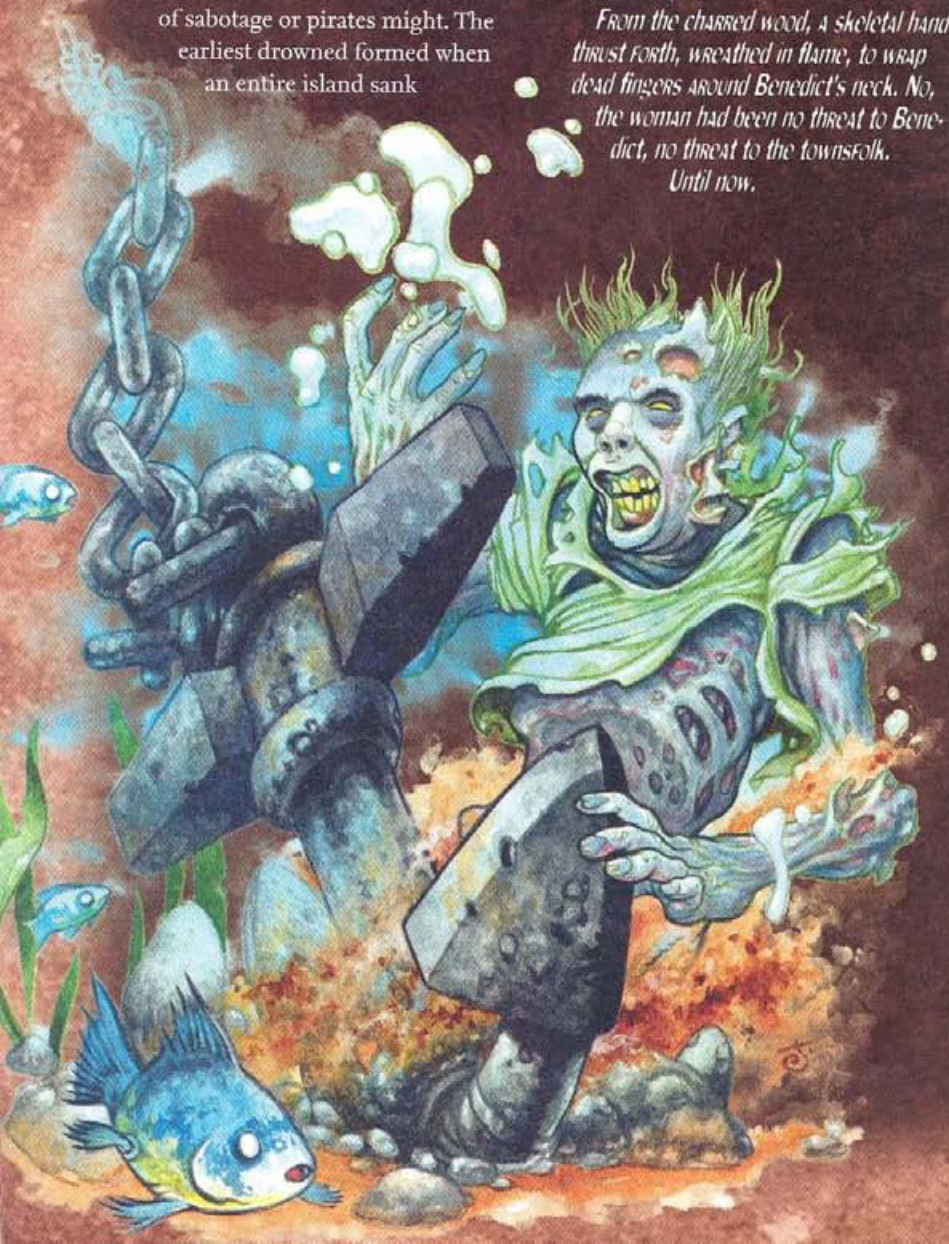
"There's every need to do this," he chortled, once more testing the ropes that bound the merchant to the iron weight.

"Gods, why?"

"Because it's fun."

Allaris screamed as the anchor dropped, choking as the seawater flooded his chest. Then it was his lungs that screamed, but they too eventually stopped.

Clearly, not all who drown become undead. Drowned appear when people perish beneath the waves specifically due to the actions (or negligence) of others. A ship that sinks due to storm damage does not transform those onboard into drowned, but one that sinks because of sabotage or pirates might. The earliest drowned formed when an entire island sank because of the foolish efforts of a powerful mage to enslave the sea god, and it is his curse that continues to form these undead today. Source: *Monster Manual III*, page 46.



Effigy

"It is done." Father Benedict turned to face the gathered crowd, most of whom still stared at the gruesome figure tied to the smoldering stake. "She has been purified, cleansed by the divine flame. No longer shall her vile witcheries bedevil our town. We are safe once more."

Benedict laced his fingers and smiled benignly at the townsfolk as they filed from the square. The harlot had been no witch at all, but her sacrifice would buy him time to deal with the real culprit without his people turning on him. His position was secure, and he—

From the charred wood, a skeletal hand thrust forth, wreathed in flame, to wrap dead fingers around Benedict's neck. No, the woman had been no threat to Benedict, no threat to the townsfolk.

Until now.

Like so many undead, effigies form from the hate and rage of a dying individual. Such people must die under circumstances wherein they believe they have been deprived of their rightful due by the actions of others. For example, someone murdered on the verge of completing a major ambition or gaining a windfall might become an effigy. In addition, an effigy can only form if the individual died by fire, such as a *fireball* or *flame strike* spell, or a dragon's breath. This factor, far more than any other, explains why ghosts are more common than effigies. Source: *Monster Manual II*, page 89.

Famine Spirit

He could feel himself dying.

The filth stung his wounds, making them fester, yet he dared not leave the shelter of the sewer. The guild still sought him, would kill him to prevent him from revealing what he knew. If only he had refused to help them—but the riches they'd offered were so great and he had so little.

Another day. Just another day and they would have moved on to some other district. Another day, and he could leave these accursed sewers and start anew somewhere else.

He didn't know he had been telling himself "just another day" for weeks on end. He didn't know that he was long dead, dead of starvation and want. He didn't know that when he finally found the strength to walk again, it would be as something utterly inhuman.

Not everyone who dies of hunger becomes a famine spirit. Specifically, someone must spend much of his life hungry or otherwise wanting for basic necessities. Potential sources include people living in poverty or who dwell in famine-prone areas. The individual must, near the end of his life, have had the opportunity to raise himself from his current state, perhaps to acquire riches or move to more fertile lands. This

chance must be snatched away by the actions of another person or sentient being, thus causing the individual to perish not only of starvation but also of frustration and cruelly shattered hopes. Only when all these conditions are met, a truly strong-willed individual becomes a famine spirit. Source: *Monster Manual II*, page 96.

Ghast

The first had been legitimate. After the fifth week of being stranded in the damned mountain pass one of them had to go or they'd all have died. The taste had awakened something in him. The second, the third, the fourth—they didn't have to die. The hand could have waited another few weeks before making that decision again.

Unfortunately, the others had found him leaning over his sister's body, chewing the flesh from her bones. He'd never even had the chance to raise his head before the smith had crushed it with a hammer.

Rising later that night, he found that death hadn't done a thing to dull his new-found hunger.

The best-known methods for creating a ghast are through *create undead* and by contracting ghoul fever. A third method exists, however. If someone who might spontaneously become a ghoul at death dies while actually in the process of consuming humanoid flesh, he instead rises as a ghast. Like their lesser cousins, ghasts are a literal manifestation of cannibalism. While ghouls often consume their prey alive simply because it's expedient to do so, ghasts actively enjoy the torment and horror caused by the slow consumption of a conscious victim. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 119.

Ghost

"Mister, can you help me?"

Regdar stopped and peered in through the open doorway. He couldn't see much in the darkness beyond, but the voice was clearly that of a little girl. "What's wrong, kid?"

"I went to tell Mommy I was feeling better, but something's wrong. I can't reach her, and she won't wake up when I call."

The old fighter's heart sank. This kid had probably just lost her mother, and didn't understand. Still, maybe the woman was alive, maybe he could bring her to the temple in time to do some good. Steeling himself, Regdar stepped inside. "Take me to her," he ordered.

For just an instant, he felt a small hand take his own, and then pain flashed through his body, from his fingers to his heart. Even as he collapsed to his knees, chest too tight even to shout, he felt the "hand" pass straight through his flesh, and he heard the little girl sigh.

"Oh, drat. I can't reach you either."

Ghosts are perhaps the most paradoxical of the undead. Held to the Material Plane through raw emotion, ghosts possess a burning need to complete some task or remain near some person or place. While love and determination are often the driving motivations behind a ghost's existence, ghosts invariably turn into beings of hatred and stasis, destroying all who would interfere in their eternal existence even as they desperately seek a way out of it.

The majority of ghosts have some task of great importance left undone. Possibly as simple as exacting revenge on whoever killed them, or as complex as completing the translation of a dead language, ghosts can often be destroyed only by completing whatever task they left unfulfilled. Further, all ghosts believe they died violently or of unnatural causes. A woman who dies of old age probably doesn't become a ghost, unless she believes she was poisoned. Similarly, those who die of illness rarely rise as ghosts unless they believe the plague was deliberately spread. The truth of the matter is unimportant; only the individual's strongly held belief matters.

In a few rare instances, the ignorant or innocent might remain as ghosts without even realizing they are dead. These ghosts can be even harder to destroy, for they cannot rest until they understand and accept the fact that they have died. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 116.

Ghoul

It just hadn't occurred to him.

Lidda had been dragged into a hidden passage, but Redgar hadn't seen by what. He'd followed her in and found a band of foul undead already leaning over her, chewing on her, ripping her flesh. He'd torn into them with a shriek of rage, and the sheer impact of his attack had scattered them long enough for him to scoop up the halfling and carry her away. There he'd camped for days, waiting for her to snap out of the fever that wracked her body.

Regdar just assumed it was an infection brought on by the filthy nails and teeth of the creatures. It never occurred to him to think that, just maybe, the illness she'd contracted was anything more.

Now, as he lay paralyzed, the corpse of his best friend slowly eating his left leg, he had nothing left to do but think about what he'd done—and what he would soon become.

Ghouls most often result from an infection of ghoul fever or the *create undead* spell. In some instances, however, individuals who spent their lives feeding on others spontaneously rise as ghouls. This "feeding" can be literal, such as habitual cannibalism, or figurative, such as a tax-collector who takes more than the law requires so he might feed his avarices. Only those who commit these acts personally risk becoming a ghoul. A distant lord who commands his soldiers to rob the peasants blind is not at risk, but a greedy landlord who charges poor families every copper they own and then cheerfully evicts them certainly is. Some see the transformation into a ghoul as a curse from the deities, punishment

for a life of greed and sin. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 118.

Huecuva

"Damn you, Heironeous!" Sir Abran Shar, paladin and lifelong servant of the god of valor, railed at the heavens, his holy symbol falling from slack fingers to the dirt at his feet. The shambling undead closed in from all sides, undaunted by his failed attempt to drive them back.

They had failed utterly, as had his efforts to heal his beloved Tricia. She lay dead beside the corpse of Abran's brother Varin, together even in death. Abran could have forgiven Tricia for the affair, but his brother? A betrayer who shared his blood? Varin had earned Abran's sword in his back. Surely Heironeous could not hold that against him, not after a lifetime of service!

"Damn you, why have you forsaken me?" Abran felt the first of the zombies tear into his flesh, felt himself falling before the endless onslaught.

Legend tells that a huecuva results from a curse levied on fallen clerics, druids, monks, and paladins. As punishment for their heresies, their patron deities condemn them to a state of eternal undeath.

In truth, this is only partially correct. Most deities who count paladins and druids among their servants are unlikely to inflict such an undead horror upon the world. Indeed these fallen souls are cursed by their patron—but that curse is simply the complete abandonment of the former servant's soul, leaving him open to whatever evils might lurk in the depths of his spirit. Eventually, these evils consume him, leaving little but resentment and loathing for the deity that once favored him. Only then, when such powerful hate mingles with lingering divine energy does the fallen faithful become a huecuva. Source: *Fiend Folio*, page 94.

Lich

The venerable mage screamed as the magic flowed through him, tearing him apart from within. His body quaked with the palsy that had threatened to rob him of his spells, yet his fist remained clenched around the tiny metal box that was his salvation—and his curse.

For just a moment, as he convulsed and the few remaining hairs fell from his head, his eyes widened in horror. A part of him suddenly realized what he was about to lose, and his soul quailed at the thought. The dying part of him was the same part that cared. Before he could even draw breath to scream, it was gone, and he needed to draw no breath at all.

As the quintessential "self-made" undead, a lich is a spellcaster who becomes undead through a complex ritual that takes years of research and careful experimentation. This involves the creation of a phylactery, a vessel to contain the lich's essence. The process requires Craft Wondrous Item, 120,000 gp, and 4,800 XP. Discovering the proper formulas and incantations to create a phylactery requires a DC 35 Knowledge (arcane) or Knowledge (religion) check. This check requires 1d4 full months of research. Note that this check represents starting from scratch and can be bypassed entirely if the knowledge is available (such as through a tome or tutor).

Perhaps the most common form of the accompanying ritual for arcane liches—although not the only one—involves the spells *create undead*, *magic jar*, and *permanency*. The comparable rite for clerical liches involves *create undead*, *harm*, and *unhallow*.

Some sages worry about the fact that

the rite to become a lich varies and exists in so many combinations. It almost seems as though some greater power wanted to make it relatively easy for those who wished to become liches to do so. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 166.

Mohrg

The cheering crowd all but drowned out the thump of the trap door beneath Cairan's feet and the snap of the noose around his neck. His tongue protruded from his lips like an eel, seeming to twitch of its own accord. Tordek watched impassively as the murderer's feet kicked twice, and then fell still. The dwarf moved to go, then glanced back. Surely it was a trick of the light, a shadow in the rising sun, but Cairan's tongue seemed almost to protrude further still from his slack mouth. Concerned, and unable to press through the throng, Tordek turned from the courtyard and raced to the nearest temple.

When he and the cleric returned, forcing their way through hordes of screaming people and confused guards, the courtyard was empty but for a dozen blood-stained corpses and an empty, swinging noose.

Mohrgs are mass murderers or similar villains, but not all dead murderers become mohrgs. To become a mohrg, a killer must not only fail to atone for his crimes, he must intend to kill again. In other words, only murderers whose sprees are interrupted by death rise as mohrgs. A hanged killer possesses a better chance of rising as a mohrg than one slain through any other means. Even the wisest sages maintain no real idea why this should be, although some speculate it is because hanging is often considered the most dishonorable means of execution.

Only the spell *create undead* can form a mohrg from a corpse that is not a murderer. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 189.

Mummy

Neblin hastily translated the inscription on the dusty tomb walls. "They stand before him in his eternal house, behind him, and to either side. They are ever watchful, although they sleep, Anubis shows to them their foes."

"Wonderful" shouted Tordek, while busily chopping away at the dry corpse bent on crushing his skull. "Read faster!"

Stuttering, Neblin continued, "They are loyal to Akht-Thukonin, Emissary of Twice-Living Osiris, And the gods will carry them on swift winds to strike down whomsoever shall desecrate his home."

"I thought you said there would be some way to stop them—" Tordek shouted just as one of their stone hard fists slammed into the side of his head.

Normally formed via ancient burial rites, the process to create a mummy

involves complex spells, chants, and designs. The mummification ritual entails the removal of internal organs and the slow drying and desiccation of the corpse. In many ancient cultures, mummification is reserved for royalty. In others, bodyguards and servants become mummified as well, in order to better serve in the next world. Most mummification rituals do not result in undead—merely desiccated corpses. Those that do produce undead creatures often intend to do so from the outset, using *create undead* to create guardians or undying minions.

On very rare occasions, an individual might spontaneously rise as a mummy. If a person dies in a state of anger and hatred and if his body is naturally mummified or preserved, due perhaps to exposure to great heat and dryness, the individual might reanimate and seek to destroy the object of his rage. These "natural" mummies lack the funerary wrappings of standard mummies, and can easily be mistaken for other forms of corporeal undead. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 190.

Nightshade

Mialee sank to her knees, exhausted, as she allowed the gate to close. Even over her panting breaths she could hear Jozan limp up behind her. "We did it, Mialee. A dozen years, but Regdar is avenged."

The elf looked up through strands of blood-matted hair. "It was a near thing. We couldn't have beaten that demon."

"We didn't have to." Jozan looked at the spot where the gate had stood. "Even fiends can have the life sucked out of them. That's a world of pure anti-life. Nothing can survive that."

The cleric was right, of course. Not even the great fiend could survive the Negative Energy Plane. As those energies invaded its body, turning it into something other than what it had been, it clung to its hate, determined that—living or dead—it would make those mortals pay for what they had done.

Nightshades were entities of pure evil even before they became undead. They result when outsiders with the evil subtype are continually subjected to negative energies long after death. The type of nightshade the fiend becomes is determined by adding up its Hit Dice and its Charisma modifier. If the total is 10 or less, the creature cannot become a nightshade. From 11 to 18, the creature might rise as a nightwing; 19 to 26, as a nightwalker; and 27 or more, as a nightcrawler. Nightshades, although intelligent, remember only pieces of their existence before becoming undead and retain none of their special abilities. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 195.

Shadow

With a shout of fury, Krush forced Sir Baras's blade aside and drove his axe into the blackguard's collarbone. Had the knight of Hextor been fully capable, Krush could never have beaten him. After Naull had struck Baras with a deep violet ray, however, the barbarian had found himself the blackguard's equal. Baras's eyes went wide, and then clouded as the life drained from him.

"Told you not to interfere," Krush grunted between gasps, spent by the fury of battle.

"You were losing," the wizard told him simply.

"Nah. Lulling him. False sense of security."

Still arguing, the pair moved from the torch-lit chamber. In the flickering firelight, Baras's shadow remained against the wall. It had not fallen when the knight collapsed, and now it moved silently, purposefully, after the worn adventurers.

In ancient times, before the development of *create greater undead*, the first shadow arose. Shadows spontaneously manifest when someone dies due, at least in part, to her own physical weakness. A warrior slain after rendered helpless by a *ray of enfeeblement* spell, an old woman murdered because she lacked the strength to fight back or scream for help, or a rogue slowly eaten by rats after incapacitation by poison might become a shadow. These creatures

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lack the intelligence, purpose, and force of will possessed by ghosts. All a shadow understands its own weakness, and it must strengthen itself by stealing the vigor of others. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 221.

Spectre

"It is done!" Regdar raised the severed head of the assassin in one hand, his bastard sword clenched tightly in the other. Behind him, the other members of the duke's court clustered around him fearfully. Before him, floating in the entrance to the great hall, hung the spiritual image of the duke himself, slowly descending toward those huddled below.

"Your murderer has been discovered and slain!" the fighter continued, fighting the urge to flee from the hovering apparition. "Surely you need kill no one else to slake your thirst for vengeance! You can move on to your well-earned rest!"

For long moments, the spirit hovered motionless. Then, with a bone chilling laugh, it drifted forward with its arms outstretched.

Spectres might almost be described as "proto-ghosts." When not created by spells or the touch of another spectre, they manifest in a similar fashion to ghosts. They rise from the violent death of someone who lacks the requisite strength of purpose to become a true ghost, yet who possesses sufficient will and fury that they cannot move on. They become an instrument of wrath and vengeance, lacking any goal or task whose completion might eventually allow them to find rest. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 232.

Sword Wraith

"The battle's over. The battle's over."

Mialee rocked back and forth, sitting on a fallen log, arms wrapped around her knees, whispering to herself. "The battle's over."

In all her years, fighting monsters and the armies of evil, she had seen nothing like it. Hordes of fiends, flights of dragons, and an endless sea of black-clad orcs all lay in heaps around her. She overlooked a massive field carpeted in corpses and drenched in blood so deep that not a blade of grass could clearly be seen. She lived, only because Tordek—now laid out upon that field—did not. The spear had been meant for her, not for him.

Mialee screamed as pain lanced through her back and side. She turned as she tumbled from the log, and stared up in horror at the blood-soaked beard and lifeless eyes of Tordek.

The battle is never over.

Like a ghost, a sword wraith is driven by a single-minded ambition that lingers after death—in this case, the desire to continue battle, to shed more blood. Unlike the ghost, however, the sword wraith's purpose might not actually be his own. The bloodlust and dark desires of his fellow soldiers often mixes with the sword wraith's own. Thus, the purpose that drives a sword wraith might belong to any one of the soldiers lying dead on the field, or might even be an entire platoon's combined discipline and love of carnage. This can sometimes create sword wraiths from the noblest commanders and the lowliest scouts. Source: *Fiend Folio*, page 173.

Vampire

"They buried him face down?" Lidda asked, her voice puzzled.

"That's right."

"Why?"

Jozan shrugged at the halfling. "Because suicide is an affront to his god, and those who kill themselves might rise again, their desire for death met instead with eternal suffering. By burying him facedown, the locals hope that he will simply dig himself deeper when he attempts to claw his way out of his coffin, rather than escaping and feasting on them."

"Weird. So what's the problem?"

The cleric pointed to a burial plot in the center of the cemetery. The stone marker was askew, the earth piled in heaps.

"Clearly, it didn't work."

Almost everyone knows that vampires spawn other vampires, but myth and legend present many other possible origins for these infamous undead. In cultures that believe suicide is a sin, anyone who takes his own life might rise from his coffin as a vampire. Those who make deals with entities of evil and gods of death, seeking power or immortality, often become vampires, their desires granted in a most twisted fashion. Also, someone

who might otherwise spontaneously rise as a ghoul, slain specifically through negative energy or the result of a curse, might instead rise as a vampire, a drinker of blood rather than an eater of flesh. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 250.

Wight

It had been so long since Lady Anara could just relax.

For so many weeks she had dwelt in hiding, watching over her shoulder for the lover she'd scorned to marry Lord Hirritz. It was only after she left him that she learned what had happened to his last four paramours—for he had tried to do it to her as well.

The Watch had finally run him to ground and cut his throat on the spot. She no longer had to worry about footsteps in the middle of the night, of the feel of a cold chain around her neck. Lady Anara could finally relax.

"Hello, my love." The voice drifted to her from the doorway, a voice made hoarse by a severed windpipe. "I've missed you."

Wights, unless created by other wights, are animated almost entirely by their desire to do violence. Just as ghouls arise from those who feed off others, wights result from the deaths of individuals whose sole purpose in life was to maim, torture, or kill. Simply coming from a profession that requires one to kill, such as a soldier or gladiator, is not sufficient; the individual must harbor a true love of carnage and take intense pleasure in ending life. Wights arise only when the person died frustrated, unable to complete a murder he had already begun, or unable to find a chosen victim. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 225.

Wraith

"Gimble, look at this." Hennet lifted the hand of the desiccated corpse, sending a puff of dust into the air.

The gnome bent, eyes narrowed. "Gods, Hennet. His fingertips are missing!" Indeed, even the bone was worn smooth, as though the man's fingers had been sanded down.

The sorceress nodded, then pointed to the largest piece of stone that, until the pair of explorers broke it in, had been a wall. Several shallow grooves marred the stone, the dried blood of centuries ago still faintly visible within.

"He was entombed alive in here," Hennet whispered. "Can you even imagine what that must have been like?"

Behind them, a dark form slid from the shadows, a dark form with the silhouette of the corpse they studied. Soon, it swore, they would not have to imagine.

Like spectres, wraiths are the spirits of those who died under horrific circumstances, but who lack the strength of purpose to return as ghosts. Whereas spectres are born from sudden acts of violence, wraiths result from slow, lingering deaths. Someone bricked up inside a wall and allowed to starve, or slowly poisoned, is more likely to return as a wraith than a spectre. Those wraiths who do not arise spontaneously result from the touch of other wraiths or from the *create greater undead* spell. Source: *Monster Manual*, page 257.

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LUKAS

Bandits in the Paths of Fame

BY JAMES LOWDER
ILLUSTRATED BY CHUCK LUKACS

Fezrin Salaghül hated stories about heroes. He despised "The Dream Vision of Clust," repeated ad naseum at religious festivals across the lands of Thulia, and the ode to Nemtyr of Bifrost, composed by the notoriously long-winded mechanical bard Af Bramas. He loathed the brainlessly blood-soaked epics celebrating the glorious victory of Falsanor Bridge and the somehow equally glorious defeat of Dreamdeath Field. He found only mirth in the elegy mourning the demise of Rokmaron, son of Roktorin, a poem so obsequious that Salaghül suspected the thane of composing it in praise of himself long before he and every other dwarf mysteriously vanished from the world.

Worst of all were the innumerable romances and dramas chronicling the legend of Bishop Petrus, the so-called "Gentle Fist." The run of the mill stories about the Holy Knights of Mardu and Arda were bad enough. Not, of course, that any Holy Knight was run of the mill. After all, the god of war and his twin, the goddess of peace, didn't single out just anyone to reward with a mystical brand and powers beyond the ken of other mortals. Even so, the struggles of the order's founder to assuage the world's pain seemed to elicit the most egregious pap from poets and dramatists. No one, in Salaghül's opinion, could be as pure of motive as Petrus came off in these tales. In his travels as a politician of no little accomplishment, Salaghül had never met anyone noble enough to be a Holy Knight, let alone a paragon of virtue like the Gentle Fist.

Simply put, the heroes these stories celebrated did not—could not—exist. Of this he was certain.

Given his long-held and vehemently defended opinion, Fezrin Salaghül was more surprised than anyone to one day hear himself announce, "When I again set foot on civilized soil, I will inquire into the services of a bard. Your actions this day deserve to be set down for posterity."

They were the first words that occurred to Salaghül when he looked up from the dirt at the square-jawed swordsman who

had just saved his life. The offer somehow felt appropriate. Something about the fellow—his rugged appearance, the way his blade seemed to belong in his hand, or perhaps his oh-so-timely arrival on a scene of potential slaughter—prompted the unprecedented thoughts in the politician's mind.

The stranger snorted disdainfully at the suggestion, bringing a hand up to his left shoulder as if the words were a bolt that had struck him there. Perhaps he'd aggravated an old wound chasing off the dozen bandits who had cornered Salaghül and his young charge in the lonely box canyon. The stranger looked the sort to have a lot of old wounds.

"Your reaction indicates an aversion to bards," the politician noted with a nervous little laugh. "I congratulate you on your good sense. I usually disdain the blackguards myself." Salaghül scrambled to his feet and trailed after the swordsman, who was striding purposefully toward Salaghül's companion. The politician was left to babble at the man's cloaked back. "I'm hard-pressed now to say what prompted me to blurt out such a silly offer. Relief, perhaps, at finding myself still alive. Your appearance was certainly fortuitous. If I might inquire what brought you to our—?"

"No," the stranger replied without turning around.

The swordsman stopped before a young blonde woman kneeling over a corpse—the lone bandit who had come within reach of her blade. She didn't acknowledge the stranger's presence, instead continuing her examination of the dead man's weapons, his ragged clothes, the contents of his pockets.

"He's not carrying much," she announced. "And none of his fellows lugged heavier packs, at least the ones we saw." She stood, then toed the corpse's rounded stomach. The gesture was meant to be cold, analytical, as if she'd examined a hundred battlefield casualties, but a momentary wrinkle of her petite nose betrayed her distaste. "He ate well, which means the thieves either kept someone hanging back with their supplies, out of harm's way, or they've got a camp nearby."

The swordsman studied her with an oddly detached stare, as if she were a painting of a beautiful woman and not an actual one; he did not speak. Salaghül, who had finally caught up, eyed the dead man and sniffed, "Congratulations. You've discerned his dining habits. Why should we care?"

"It might reveal how desperate they are, how likely to return right away," she replied. "Although our rescuer should be able to tell us more about the bandits."

With a dazzling smile honed upon a thousand would-be suitors, she turned to the stranger. "The way they ran from you tells me they've crossed your path before—and come out the worse for it." When he remained stonily silent, she extended her hand. "I'm Ysilda. That's Fezrin. We owe you our lives, but at the moment I'm afraid we've little more than our thanks to offer as repayment."

He reached out and trapped her slender fingers with his grimy, callused ones. From the way he shifted his grip, Ysilda thought he was going to kiss the back of her hand. Instead, he maneuvered her fingers so that he could examine her ruby ring.

"Royalty," he said, his tone poised perfectly between respect and disdain.

"I'm impressed. Not many men would recognize the crest on the gem. I am indeed a descendant of the House of Sul." Ysilda mocked a curtsy. "A princess—although a rather minor one, I'm afraid."

Salaghül interposed himself between the two. He shot Ysilda a withering glance, meant to convey his dismay at her candor. There was no telling who the stranger might be, or the gist of his intentions, whatever aura of nobility surrounded him. Still, the politician found himself uncharacteristically apologetic when he turned to the swordsman and said, "We are, as you can see, more humble travelers than the lady's title suggests. Scarcely worth robbing, despite what those bandits thought."

"In the Feral Lands, worth is measured upon unusual scales," replied the stranger. "If you didn't know that, you were fools to come here—particularly alone."

Salaghül bristled at the insult, but the princess smiled, although rather sadly, and said, "There were more of us at one time. But you seem to be the one traveling alone. I would be glad if we could remedy that, Sir. . . ?"

"Andrath," he said. "Not 'Sir,' either. Just Andrath. Where are you going?"

"Hrengbad."

As family tradition demanded, the princess uttered the name of that cursed place in a whisper. More than two centuries past, Hrengbad had been the heart of the sultanate of Nahkla, demesne of Ysilda's ancestors. The palace-city was a monument to the kingdom's wealth and its rulers' mastery of the Darkfire Arts. To construct the marvelous towers and glittering halls, the sultanas had enslaved a thousand magical creatures and forced them to toil upon the project for years on end. The scions of Sul believed Hrengbad would stand forever, an eternal symbol of their realm's importance and their ascendancy in the ever-treacherous magical arts.

Then Zalantys came.

After a thousand years of prosperity, Nahkla fell to the mad sorcerer in just thirteen months. Its people abandoned the ancient towns and villages, even majestic Hrengbad, as waves of Chaos-fueled enchantment washed over the sultanate from Zalantys's newly built palace of mirages at Dementae. Wild magic engulfed the fields and forests, corrupting all, moving west in uneven pulses, until it broke finally upon the foothills of the Deepvein Mountains. When it receded, it left the

once-verdant lands a twisted, tortured waste populated by uncanny creatures and shambling undead, and the palace-city of Hrengbad a ruin whose name the scions of Sul swore never to speak above a whisper until it was restored to its former magnificence.

Salaghül, not being of the royal bloodline, was free from their traditions, and he spat the city's name now as if it were the vilest of curses. His animosity was inspired in part by the ruined city's role in bringing him to this wretched place, but also by the princess's lack of discretion in revealing their destination to the stranger.

Ysilda dismissed his blasphemy and his unspoken but obvious concerns with a wave of her hand. Then she curtsied to the swordsman, this time fully and politely. "We would be grateful for your company, Andrath."

"I'm no nursemaid," he said. "Or tour guide."

"Thankfully, we have need of neither," Ysilda replied. "We're not tourists, come to ogle the local ruins. As for nursemaids—" she gestured to the dead man "—I can take care of myself, if the need arises. I wouldn't be on this journey if—"

The princess's words were cut short by a sudden clash of steel, the sharp, ringing clang of her blade meeting Andrath's. Without a word of warning, the swordsman had drawn his weapon and lunged for Ysilda. The young woman, half his size and even less than half his age, must have recognized some sign of his intent, though, for she had drawn her own weapon and met the thrust. For a heartbeat, the two duelists stood still. Then they parted, each stepping back in the same instant. Thrust and parry, move and countermove, testing for weakness and finding none. Again and again their blades met, only to tap and clatter, then dance away, or grind together and slide apart with an angry, exuberant hiss.

A final flurry of quick strikes, and the skirmish was done. Ysilda and Andrath bowed their weapons in respect. The sword tips flicked the red earth before finding their scabbards.

"I needlepoint rather well, too," the princess said with a self-satisfied smirk. She tried to conceal her surprise as she wiped the perspiration from her brow. The man was the best she had ever faced, superior even to the fencing masters who had trained her in the free cities of Centros and Falsanor. There was no need for such care in disguising her wonder, however. Andrath was no longer looking at her.

His gaze was fixed on Salaghül, who had retreated from the clash the moment the first blow was struck. The politician now studied the wall of the box canyon with a forced casual air, apparently examining some interesting bit of geology, where a moment before he had been scrambling for cover. His sword remained in its scabbard, dangling impotently, catching on the low scrub behind which he'd retreated.

"He's useless in a fight," the princess admitted as she came to Andrath's side. "He's only accompanying me to escape the wrath of my uncle, who paid him handsomely to influence a tax assessment that tallied even more harshly after his interference. Still, he has his value. He's a brilliant man, more learned than anyone I know, and a scholar of ancient Nahklan culture without peer."

"There's little call for etiquette lessons here." Andrath swept one hand wide, to indicate the lonely canyon surrounding them. Its walls were striated black and dripping crimson, in patterns uncomfortably similar to the wet musculature beneath flayed human skin. "Or hadn't you noticed?"

"Actually," the princess replied with a toss of her blonde hair, "I believe the bandits had been pursuing us for information about flatware placement. State secrets, don't you know..."

The flippant façade slipped for an instant, and a frown tugged at the corners of Ysilda's mouth. "Too many good men were lost to get me even this far," she said. Her face looked older now, more beautiful for the gravity of her expression. "Please help me finish the journey."

"To what end?"

"So that I might restore the Ruined City and heal the Feral Lands—"

Salaghül had wandered back, now that the fighting was ended. His disgusted snort made her pause, but only for an instant.

"I mean to reclaim the sultana's throne," she continued, "then undo the effects of Zalantys's magic. Late last year I learned of a secret ritual conducted in the Ruined City to test those of my house, to find the one foretold in the Prophecies of Sul with the power to withstand the mage-king's madness."

Andrath nodded slowly. "I'll do what I can to help."

The perfect oval of Ysilda's face brightened again, like a spoiled child's does when she's finally gotten her way. "Excellent. When I'm sultana, I'll shower you with jewels for your efforts on Our Royal Behalf."

Andrath turned away. "You were right about the bandits; I've had dealings with them. They'll likely keep their distance so long as you're with me, but we don't want to linger here. They have bows and might decide to try for a lucky shot..."

With that he started down the canyon—not toward the mouth, but toward the high rear wall. Ysilda and Salaghül snatched up their belongings and hurried after him. Only as they closed in on the terminus did they notice a narrow black slash in the rock, darker than the shadows draping the walls around it. They had to turn sideways to enter, but the gap widened to a cave broad enough and tall enough for the three to stand together with ease, even shoulder to shoulder. Andrath lit a torch and

handed it to Ysilda, then gathered up his bedroll and small pack, and finally the dressed remains of two recent hunting kills—small carcasses with shapes suggesting a mix of rodent and lizard. From the looks of the cave, he'd been camped at the site for several days.

"A hunter," Salaghül whispered to the princess. "At least that explains what he was doing in the canyon, how he showed up the way he did."

The swordsman shepherded them through a tunnel farther into the earth. The way twisted and turned, rising up gradually. After what seemed like a day, but was really only an hour or two, the natural tunnel met up with a round excavation that crossed it, spiraling up toward the surface in one direction, deeper down to impenetrable gloom in the other. At first the excavation appeared treacherously smooth and too steep to climb, more a chute than a stair. On closer inspection, the footing proved no problem. The passing of a gigantic creature burrowing down through the solid rock—for no hammer could have created so regular a hole—had left small, nearly invisible ridges, as regular as steps, all along the way.

Salaghül and Ysilda reacted to the fantastic sight with something akin to indifference. In their trek across the Feral Lands, they'd already witnessed things that would make such a creature pulsing through stone and earth appear no more unusual than a draft horse hauling a wagon through the wide paved streets of Paladur.

Weird, unnatural beasts had not always roamed free here, but they were commonplace now, the lingering legacy of Zalantys's sorcery and the destruction of Nahkla. More dangerous still were the gates—rifts torn in the fabric of reality by the advance and retreat of the wild magic. They blotched the landscape like open wounds.

As he led Salaghül and Princess Ysilda across the shattered land, along routes traveled only by the brave or the reckless, Andrath steered them around many horrors, monstrous things that had passed through the gates from the other side and had either found the Feral Lands to their liking or had not yet discovered a way to escape them. The trio watched what appeared to be a funnel cloud pass by, only to discover it was not a cyclone or dust devil, composed of wildly circulating air, but a beautiful creature of living spun glass. It floated above the ground, rotating slowly. When it touched the earth, it shrieked like a prisoner on the rack and left spatters of stinking flesh.

From a high cliff they witnessed a battle between two mobs of squat, child-sized ant-men, one group red, the other black. Each gang operated a wooden figure, a gigantic version of their own hideous forms. The constructs moved with painful deliberation as they battled, but each thunderous strike of their pincered hands shook the ground and sent squads scurrying with insectlike efficiency to repair the damage inflicted upon their fighting engine. When the princess lingered too long to watch the spectacle and was spotted by the ant-men, Andrath had to create an avalanche of stone to slow the squads swarming up the cliffs. He later explained how the creatures coveted human bones for use as nails to hold together their constructs.

The gates through which these bizarre creatures had entered the Feral Lands presented a threat all their own. Some of the magical portals were obvious. They appeared as portals in the air. Through these windows a traveler might behold a magnificent emerald city at the end of a yellow brick road or a grim metal mountain surrounded on all sides by odd, vast watchers, the last redoubt of light and humanity in a night-cloaked world.

Many more of the gates were hidden, their presence suggested by strains of peculiar music or a breeze sharp with the smell of a nearby ocean, there in the midst of the barren plains. Others could be discerned by the small oases growing before them, clusters of plants utterly alien to the Feral Lands. These ferns and palms and creeping vines were more suited to the deepest jungle or most fetid swamp, but the phantom weather from the open gates kept them alive all the same.

The most dangerous were the thresholds that gave no warning of their presence until some unfortunate soul triggered them. One moment a traveler would be walking through a ruined temple or along an isolated ridge, the next he would find himself somewhere else—perhaps a place of wonder, perhaps a place of endless danger or everlasting pain. Andrath started to warn the princess of these dangers, but there was no need. One of the soldiers they'd lost along the way from the Deepveins had fallen foul of just such a gate. The portal became visible only as it swallowed her. It vanished again after claiming its victim, but had remained open long enough for the princess to glimpse the world to which it had transported the unlucky soldier—and to hear the soft chuckling of the oozing, eyeless brutes patiently awaiting her arrival.

All these things lent the Feral Lands an overwhelming sense of wrongness, so that after a while those journeying through the ruined sultanate became inured to the unreal. Their minds refused to process what they saw, beyond classing friend or foe, aid or threat or merely obstacle, and even then, uncertainty threatened to poison every observation. Stress itself became monotonous, until the sudden encounters with the odd and the spectacular blurred with the trek's more mundane distractions—the gnawing hunger and nagging thirst, the weariness brought on by too little sleep at night and endless marches during the day.

"This is the part those damned stories always ignore," Salaghül grumbled as he staggered along after Andrath and the princess. The swordsman had set a grueling pace from the start, and had increased his haste when the bandits reappeared, trailing them like persistent but cowardly hunting dogs. "Bards never relate all the walking their heroes have to do, eh Andrath?" the politician called. "They hide it behind some overlong recitation of history or useless travelogue..."

The swordsman didn't respond. He might have been too far away to hear; he'd insisted they keep some distance between them as they traveled, in case they stumbled upon a blind rift. Not that he was very talkative at most times. If they stopped for any reason, he moved off to watch for the marauders or other, more exotic threats. Otherwise, he maintained his silence and his ground-eating stride. He seemed immune to hunger and oblivious to the late afternoon heat, despite his heavy cloak and padded shirt. Only when he spotted some distant danger did he even seem aware of his companions.

For her part, Ysilda found traveling with Andrath much harder than she'd expected. Her clothes and boots discomforted her in a dozen different ways, revealing just how much they possessed the appearance of practicality rather than practicality itself. That hadn't been so apparent when she was the one calling the march. Now, though, she silently cursed the high-priced tailors and cobblers from whom she'd purchased the gear.

Despite the nagging blisters at her heels and the fog of exhaustion clouding her thoughts, she tried to muster a reply to Salaghül's observation. She'd learned soon after leaving her uncle's estate to humor him on the subject of heroes, and he'd been yammering about the topic on and off for hours, his vehemence growing with every mile crossed. She was so tired, though, she could only marshal a weak smile and a nod. It wasn't enough.

"The epics don't mention the boredom, or the annoying insects, or the way road dirt crusts your nostrils." Salaghül's voice echoed across the wastes. "In the romances, Bishop Petrus and his blasted knights never have to pick stones out of their shoes or dig latrines."

Andrath stopped and spun about. "Right," he growled, "those things don't get put into stories. But we need to sleep and eat and the rest, so shut up about it." He threw down his pack and stomped back to Salaghül. "And even if the bards don't talk about the Gentle Fist belching, the whole point of the stories is to show how he's mortal, but tries to be more."

Emboldened by exhaustion, or simply addled by it, Salaghül stood his ground when the swordsman moved close, looming over him. "More than mortal? Bard-spawned nonsense," the politician sneered. "People are what they are—self-interested and selfish and fearful—and can be no better. Holy Knights? Feh. They don't exist."

"Are you so certain?"

"Absolutely! Can you prove me wrong? Have you ever met one?"

Andrath paused, considering his answer. Then he looked away.

"As I expected," Salaghül crowed. "But you shouldn't feel badly about being duped by those stories. They inspired the princess to tromp foolishly into this awful place. Made her think that she should play the hero and save the world."

"Maybe those stories inspired Andrath to rescue us," the princess snapped.

"No," the swordsman admitted quietly. "It wasn't the stories."

"It was hope for a reward." Salaghül patted the swordsman's arm. "There's no shame in that. It's our nature..."

Andrath shook off the politician's bony hand.

"Fine," Salaghül said. "Be that way. Ideally, though, we're all a bit clearer now on the situation, free from any romantic illusions about why we're here." He turned to the princess. "This is real life, which is nothing at all like what those damnable stories make it out to be."

"Indeed," Andrath muttered as he went to recover his pack. He winced a bit as he hefted it over his shoulder. "We need to get moving again. The sun will be down before long. I know a place to camp that'll be safe from the bandits, but it's still a ways off."

They trudged on in silence through the dying afternoon, moving among tumbled boulders each the size of a giant's skull. At first the stones lay far apart. Eventually, the gaps between them dwindled, and the travelers found themselves creeping through a cramped and shadowy labyrinth. The princess suggested they climb up and travel across the boulder tops, as the going there must be easier. Andrath dismissed the idea, noting simply, "They don't like being walked on." Salaghül pondered that reply for a moment, then edged away from the stone upon which he'd been leaning, and from then on tried not to bump the maze's curiously warm walls.

Beyond the boulder field, the trio followed a path along a steep ridge stinking of sulfur. Andrath wouldn't allow them to light any torches, for fear of attracting unwelcome attention, and as the last fingers of sunlight lost their grip on the horizon, their pace diminished to a crawl. The twin moons were late in rising, the stars faint flickers through a thin shroud of clouds the color of funeral ashes, but the darkness was never quite complete. A strange radiance beckoned them from just beyond the next rise, then the one after that, and the one after that...

Ankle-sore and battered, they came at last to their destination—a broad crater at the center of which hulked a gigantic wooden platform. The source of the uncanny light huddled upon the massive planks. The winged creature's bovine body

suggested strength, but its swan's neck was all sinuous suppleness. Its mouth and snout—harsh and devoid of expression—belonged on a serpent, but its eyes were those of a pleading human child. Its coat of slick white feathers radiated an unearthly glow that brightened and dimmed in time with the beating of its heart. An intricate tangle of silver chains secured the creature to the platform. The heavy links crushed its wings and bowed its back, holding it all but motionless as its captors—a gang of undead ogres, each the height of a small house and almost as mindless—prodded it with pikes. It shrank away from the blows as best it could, and eventually opened its gaping maw, releasing not a scream, but a gusting breath that filled the night with the perfume of flower-dappled spring fields.

Salaghül breathed in the scent and, despairing of the foul, sulfurous air that it displaced all too briefly, slumped against the crater's rim. Andrath and the princess crouched beside him, and the swordsman noted in whispers that they would be safe, so long as they remained hidden behind the rocks and kept their voices down. Then he set off alone to secure a meal for them. Their water skins had been empty for hours and the last of their food had been sacrificed earlier in the day to distract a copse of walking carnivorous plants. The princess had been inspired to direct the ravenous vegetation to a narrow gap through which they'd just passed, to create an obstacle for the bandits still doggedly trailing them.

Nervously, Salaghül watched the path along the ridge for some sign of their pursuers, half-expecting each pulse of light to reveal the rogues closing in on them. After a while, though, the vigil lost his interest, and he found himself peering around the stones at the captive creature. The ogres continued to stab and slash the beast until it again opened its mouth and exhaled. Only then would the tormentors pause and snap at the air with their scraggly teeth, as if they could swallow down the scent.

"The creature's lovely, isn't it?" Ysilda said softly. "It reminds me of the angel from the Gentle Fist stories."

Salaghül grumbled, "Nonsense," even although he'd been thinking the same thing. The winged beast's contradictory appearance of strength and grace, power and powerlessness, brought to mind the bipartite messenger sent from the heavens to charge Bishop Petrus with the creation of a military order devoted in equal measure to the god of war and the goddess of peace. These soldiers would be like the messenger itself—poised between action and thought; possessed of uncanny might tempered by profound, resolute wisdom; confident, yet selfless. Salaghül stared at the creature, then dismissed the impression as one born of their earlier argument about the Holy Knights. That was the reason the beast reminded them both of

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the fictional angelic messenger. The subject had already been lurking in their thoughts.

"It shouldn't be chained like that," the princess noted.

"Slavery is a fact of life," Salaghül sniffed. "Need I remind you that your own ancestors enslaved hundreds of magical beasts? The city of Hrengbad was built upon their broken backs."

"One more reason for me to want this creature freed."

A look of horror stole over Salaghül's gaunt features. He recognized the resolve in Ysilda's voice; he heard it there every time she discussed reclaiming the sultana's throne and returning order to Nahkla. "No," he hissed.

"If the opportunity presents itself—"

"No!" Salaghül repeated, this time loudly enough that one of the ogres turned their way.

The undead brute's ears, like its nose and lips, had long ago rotted away, but it still cocked its head to listen. Soon its companions were doing the same, or studying the crater rim with their yellow, seemingly sightless eyes. Salaghül and Ysilda pressed their backs against the rocks and held their breath. The princess had her sword at the ready, should it come to a fight. With the same possibility in mind, the politician scanned the ridgeline for escape routes or hiding places. Then they heard it—the slow, shuffling gait of the ogres on the move.

The princess peered around the edge of her stony shield, expecting to see the undead things creeping toward them. Instead, the ogres were moving away. Something halfway along the crater's edge had drawn their interest. She watched them drop their unwieldy weapons, then one by one clamber with surprising agility over the rocks and vanish into the night.

"I hope they aren't after Andrath," she murmured as she sheathed her blade, grabbed a small bag from her pack, and climbed to the top of the rim. "If they are, I'll make his sacrifice worth something."

"Foolishness!" Salaghül said. "Stay here and be safe!"

"Be thankful no one gave Andrath advice like that back at the canyon." She flashed him a mocking smile, then made her way down to the crater floor.

Salaghül cowered behind the rocks and watched the princess hurry across the flat, parched ground to the platform. As she got closer, it became clear how daunting her task would be. A single link of the silver chain holding the creature to the planks was thicker than her body. Not even the ogres could have snapped one of them.

At the thought of the undead brutes, Salaghül nervously eyed the spot where they had climbed from the crater. He was certain they'd be back at any moment, no doubt carting Andrath's well-gnawed corpse. Then they'd get Ysilda and he'd be alone. Even if he could hide from them, he had no idea how to get to Hrengbad. He gnashed his teeth and silently cursed his companions' selfishness.

A small thud brought Salaghül's attention back to the crater. The princess was using her sword to chip at the platform, digging away the wood around one of the staples that held the chains in place. After each blow, she paused to watch for the ogres' return. When they did not reappear, she continued to hack away until she had amassed a small mound of wood chips.

The creature watched Ysilda calmly, as if it could sense her good intentions. The beast didn't start or shy away when the princess combined the wood chips with some fallen feathers she had gathered, heaped them around the staple, then set the mound ablaze with a flint she'd taken from her pack. The prisoner remained placid, its expressive eyes fixed on Ysilda, even as she retrieved one of the ogres' discarded pikes. Salaghül could almost feel the beast willing the princess to succeed as she hefted the heavy shaft over her head and, after three tries, positioned its blade in the fire-filled gouge she'd excavated.

They worked together—princess and monstrous prisoner. The chains had been secured in such a fashion that the creature by itself could not get enough leverage to strain any one particular link or anchor. With the damage Ysilda had done to the wood, and the stress added when she hung from the pike handle, chinning herself and letting her weight drop, the next time the beast shrugged its massive shoulders, the staple gave way.

The carefully constructed prison was undone. The creature felt the chain snap free and pulled against the weakness with all its might. The staples to either side of the one the princess had sabotaged tore loose. One chain girding the beast's wings shattered, then a second and a third, the twisted links raining down around Ysilda like gigantic hailstones. Salaghül covered his ears at the cacophony and wondered how long it would be before the undead ogres—and every other horror roaming the Feral Lands—came roaring down upon them.

The creature shook off the last of the chains and leapt into the air. Its feathers flared brightly for an instant, illuminating the landscape for miles around and blinding Salaghül. As his sight returned, the politician saw the beast's hue darken, as if it were soaking in the color of the night sky, until it was so black his eyes hurt to look upon it. Then the beast threw back its serpent's head and opened its mouth. Only this time it was not the scent of springtime fields the creature exhaled, but a reek worthy of an army of unburied battlefield corpses. With the charnel stench came a cry of triumph so loud it deafened the politician's ears to his own terrified screams.

Salaghül lay on his side, curled up and shivering with fright, until

Ysilda finally made her way back to him. The creature had let her live, or simply mistook her for dead beneath the platform's ruin as it flew off into the night. "I was trying to help," she said as she slumped down beside him. "I thought I was doing good."

It took some time for the words to pierce the fear fogging Salaghül's mind, but when they did, he chuckled bitterly. "'Doing good?'" He pushed himself from the ground and spat on Ysilda's boots. "That's what 'doing good' gets you."

"Indeed."

They looked up to find Andrath standing over them, his features as cold and emotionless as his voice. Salaghül blithely accepted that single word as confirmation of his claim. Ysilda was not so certain. When she searched the swordsman's face for some hint of his feelings, although, she found herself flinching from his hard stare. Unable to meet his gaze, cheeks burning, she turned away.

"When you're done eating, wake me up for my watch." Andrath dropped a full water skin and a game bag with something large and lumpy inside, then went to kick open his tattered bedroll.

The princess didn't eat. Neither did she allow Salaghül to awaken Andrath, insisting that she keep watch for the entire night. She used the time to mull over the day's events. The politician's cutting remarks and the swordsman's silence provided the scalpels with which she dissected the rescue. She laid bare her motivations, probing them, examining them. By the time Andrath woke on his own, in the coldest, darkest hours before dawn, Ysilda had come to a conclusion. She did not share her discovery with the swordsman, but when he noted in a frosty tone that she should have shared the watch, the princess said, "I won't hold you up on the trail today, if that's what you're worried about."

Andrath offered no reply, but throughout the morning his scowl deepened and took on a mournful cast. This was most noticeable when the princess idly remarked how they—or at least she—might have flown the rest of the way to their destination, had her plan for freeing the beast worked out as she'd envisioned. Ysilda, however, was paying the dour swordsman little attention, and Salaghül was wallowing too deeply in his own discontent to notice the change in Andrath's perpetually stony expression.

Around midday, the tips of Hrengbad's fabled towers pierced the horizon. Impressive minarets and domes rose above the crenellations of the high city wall. At a distance, it appeared they had been restored to their former glory; the damage inflicted by the mage-king's magic and the ravages of time had somehow been undone. As the travelers hurried across fields of tall, midnight-black wheat, they saw the bright sun flare from patches of beaten gold atop the palace roof and wink from gems studding the upper reaches of the crimson stone obelisk known as the Sultana's Spear.

"My presence alone has done this," Ysilda said breathlessly. She raised her voice to a joyful shout. "Hrengbad! The return of the true heir has restored you!"

It was Salaghül who spotted the marauders first. His slow, shuffling gait had left him trailing Andrath and Ysilda, and when he paused to find a suitable place to relieve himself, he noticed a pale shape sliding through the dark, waving grain behind him. Then he saw a second and a third—the bandits that had cornered them in the canyon. They were only a few hundred yards back, about half the distance left between the princess and Hrengbad's main gate. Salaghül's screech of alarm brought Andrath at a jog. The swordsman shouted for Ysilda to run as he rushed to the politician's aid.

Although Andrath's command had not been directed at him, Salaghül obeyed it too. He took off for the city gate like the most fleet-footed messenger. His bony legs pumped faster than they had in three decades. His lungs, so accustomed to powering subtle slanders and not-so-subtle complaints, burned at their sudden hard use, but did their duty. His heart rattled frantically, then settled into a steady trip-hammer rhythm as relentless as the usurious interest piling up on the loans he provided his friends and colleagues. Salaghül ran so fast and so well that a wild hope surged in him: He might catch Ysilda, might even pass her and reach the safety of Hrengbad first.

Then something tangled Salaghül's legs, and he went down in a gasping heap. He rolled onto his back, expecting to find one of the bandits towering over him, but it was Andrath standing there. The square-jawed swordsman hoisted the politician up from the dirt and stood him on his feet, even as the marauders closed in around them.

Salaghül turned pleading eyes on the still-distant gates of Hrengbad and the lone figure moving toward them. "Help us!" he shrieked.

The princess stopped and looked back, even as one of the bandits slashed Andrath across the chest. The swordsman raised his blade to strike, but another marauder clubbed him from behind. In the same instant, someone snatched Salaghül's sword from its sheath. There was little need; the politician had forgotten the weapon until it was taken from him.

Salaghül looked to his left. Andrath lay face down in the grass, a trio of leering bandits surrounding him. He turned back to the princess and reached out a trembling hand. "Please," Salaghül whimpered. "What about me...?"

Although she was well beyond earshot of such a feebly voiced

appeal, Ysilda paused a moment more, as if she were considering the plea. Then she turned her back on Salaghül and ran.

"Strumpet!" the politician cried, shaking his fist at the retreating figure. "Traitor!"

Salaghül watched as Ysilda closed on the city gates, and cursed her again for the safety she would find beyond them. That curse died on his lips when he saw the gates swing wide and a horde of monsters come swarming out. Still more hideous creatures slithered down from the high walls and boiled up from the ground. The scaled and feathered and furred things that fell upon the princess were as varied in shape as snowflakes, and as they slipped from their hiding places it became clear the city's repair was illusory, a trick of distance and of hope-bleared eyes. The gold the travelers had mistaken for sun-brightened metal on the palace roof shifted, scales on the living watcher crouched on that high perch. The gems studding the Sultana's Spear blinked as the great, flat, many-eyed fiend unwrapped itself from the still-ruined obelisk and flapped into the sky.

Ysilda's scream rang out over the plain before the myriad howls and snarls and bestial cries swelled to overwhelm it. With a moan, Salaghül turned to flee, but found himself facing a semicircle of bandits. Their expressions bespoke amusement at the politician's plight, not fear of Hrengbad's hideous inhabitants.

"It could have ended differently for her," came a voice from behind the gathered thugs. The bandits parted slightly to reveal Andrath rising from the grass. His shirt was slashed open from the blow he'd received; silver chain mail gleamed through the rift. "She'd proved herself worthy," the swordsman added. "Until today."

"I—I don't understand," Salaghül stammered. "Is this—are those... things—part of the test Ysilda was to undergo here?"

Andrath recovered his sword and sheathed it. "There was no test, not in Hrengbad. For them—" he pointed to the inhuman horde withdrawing into the city "—this is about settling old debts with the House of Sul. They're the creatures the sultanas enslaved to build this place, or their descendants. Some were monstrous to begin with. Others were warped by Zalantys's magic. But they've all bided their time here since the sultanas fled, content to take their revenge upon any of Sul's spawn who come their way. There have been many such fools over the past two centuries."

"You led us here," Salaghül whined. "You help them..."

"Only for the last decade or so. In that time I've brought them a few dozen would-be sultanas, distant cousins or bastards or ambitious pretenders. The only test those seekers take is mine—the one administered on the way here—to make certain they deserve their fate." One of the bandits brayed a nasty laugh. "Not that we're expecting to find one that don't deserve it."

"Fool," Andrath growled. "There'd be no test if no one could pass it. Nobility exists. Don't forget that. This princess freed the creature at the crater. None of you lot would ever dare that feat."

"The thing was a monster," another of the bandits mumbled.

Andrath jerked a thumb at Salaghül, who stood whimpering like a lost child. "This heap has the shape of a man, but that's deceiving, too. No, the creature at the crater was no more or less evil than any of us." He turned cold eyes on the politician. "Ysilda freed the beast, and came to seek the throne, for the right reasons—although she was too willing to swallow the poisonous nonsense you spewed. That helped her justify abandoning us. She would have been spared if she'd turned around. That's part of the deal I have with the monsters; no worthy will suffer at their hands. In the end, though, your princess revealed her true nature—and she's got to pay for her failure."

Grimacing, Andrath pressed a hand to his chest, then shot an angry glare at the man who had struck him. "I'm going to have to teach you the difference between a mock blow and a real one," he rumbled.

The swordsman stripped off his shirt, the chain mail beneath, and finally the padded doublet beneath that. A bruise had purpled where today's blow had fallen, but it was almost lost among older marks. Scars crisscrossed Andrath's chest and back—long gashes left by blade-strokes, short lines from dagger-strikes, and puckered ovals of various sizes from the bite of fanged and hungry mouths. They were the reminders of a hundred missteps in battle.

The greatest of Andrath's old wounds lay over his left collarbone, stretching from his shoulder to his breast. It was an irregular welt, somewhat rounded and as large as a big man's fist. Enough of the original marking remained to reveal that it had once been an intricate tattoo comprised of a perfectly balanced mixture of glyphs, letters, and holy symbols. Weeping lesions spoiled the pattern's perfection, ugly yellow blisters its meticulous balance of light and dark.

When the swordsman noticed Salaghül staring at the strange mark, saw the confusion on his face, he laughed bitterly. "Yes," Andrath sneered, "I was a Holy Knight. They do exist. This brand remains to remind me of that truth—and of the price I paid for my own failings."

Andrath moved so close to the politician the poisoned brand almost touched his nose. "I wasn't inspired to join the order because of stories; I grew up on a farm so isolated bards never visited us. I heard the tales later, of course, but only after my good deeds had inspired the Holy Knights to seek me out and offer me a place at their side. I served the order well, until I crossed

paths with someone much like you. She made me believe that everyone acted out of self-interest, that even the most heroic actions could be explained in terms of rewards secretly desired. Lies much like the ones you told the princess.

"Eventually, I came to believe that the other Holy Knights were fooling themselves, or expertly hiding their real faces—that even the gods accepted man's selfishness, because their mark remained on me." The corrupted tattoo throbbed as Andrath spoke, and he cringed at the pain of it. "I was wrong. Holy Knights are touched by the gods because they have the potential to accept their humanity and rise above it. When I stopped believing that—" He laid a hand over the pulsing, gangrenous wound.

His tale at an end, Andrath gestured to something that had crept up unnoticed behind Salaghül. "This one's yours, too," he said.

The beast might once have been a gorilla, although its mouth was a beetle's pincers and its back spiked with multicolored quills. The envoy from Hrengbad nodded once and clamped a heavy, seven-fingered paw on Salaghül's shoulder. With the other hand it tossed a bag to the swordsman.

"Wait!" Salaghül cried as the beast pulled him close. "Andrath, please. Whatever you're being paid, I'll double it! Triple it!"

The swordsman had already torn open the bag and twisted the lid from the small jar he'd found inside. "Whatever you offer," he said, "it can't equal this..."

Still pleading, Salaghül watched Andrath smear three fingers of salve from the little jar across his poisoned brand. The oozing cuts and festering blisters faded, then disappeared. The intricate mark of the Holy Knights of Mardu and Arda shone for an instant, a glorious unification of symbols denoting war and peace, action and contemplation.

In that instant, Andrath dropped to his knees, bowed beneath the unbearable weight of remembered glory, the purified memory of all he had lost. Then the moment passed, and the corruption spread across the brand once more.

As the monstrosity dragged Salaghül away, the embittered old politician did not marvel at the proof he had just seen for the existence of the Holy Knights. He did not lament his role in Princess Ysilda's downfall, or mourn the failure of her quest to claim the sultana's throne and heal the Feral Lands, to soothe the very Chaos-twisted creatures even then plotting a slow and excruciatingly painful death for him. He did not even rue the role he'd played in his own destruction.

Before his mind buckled, crushed by the weight of selfish fear, Fezrin Salaghül smiled horribly and congratulated himself for having been right about heroes all along.

See Dork.
See Dork go.
Go, Dork! Go!

Go, Dork. Go!

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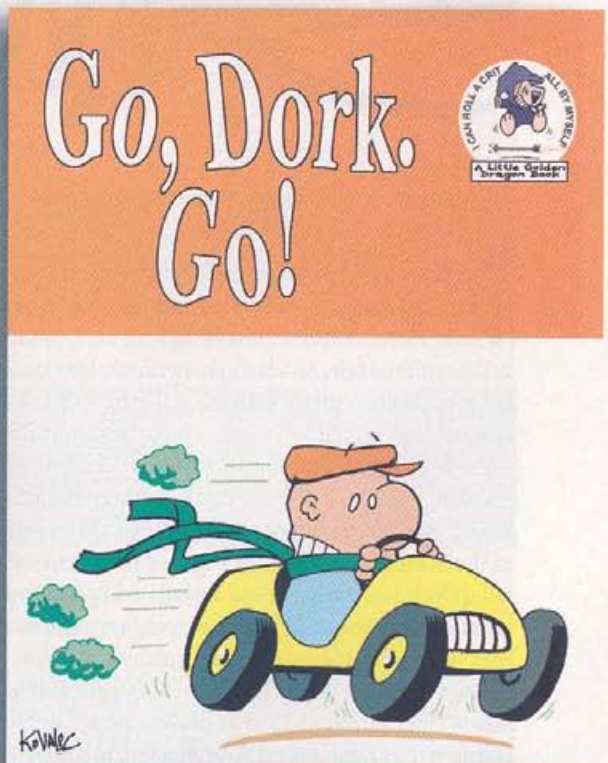

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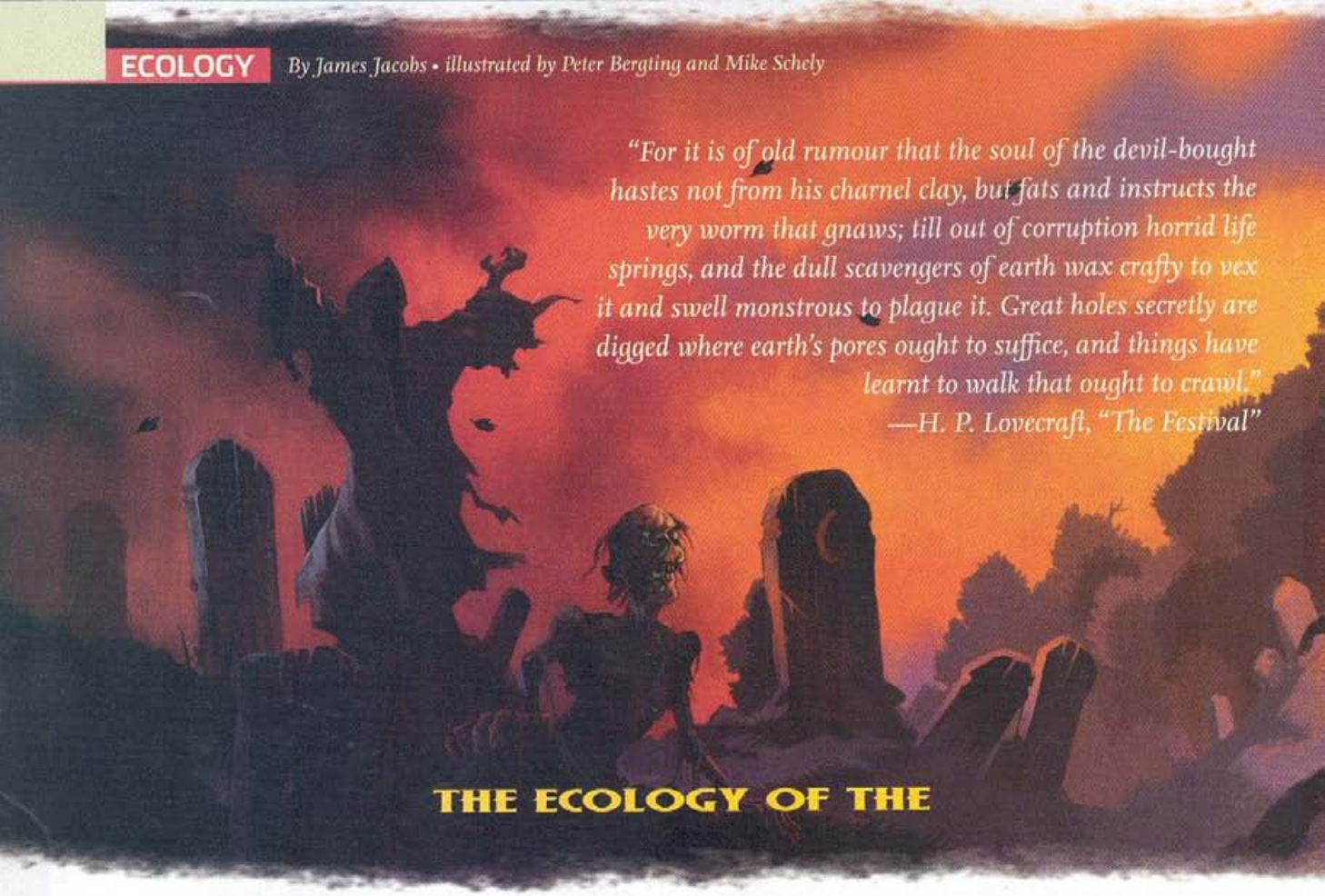


"For it is of old rumour that the soul of the devil-bought hastes not from his charnel clay, but fats and instructs the very worm that gnaws; till out of corruption horrid life springs, and the dull scavengers of earth wax crafty to vex it and swell monstrous to plague it. Great holes secretly are digged where earth's pores ought to suffice, and things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl."
—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Festival"

THE ECOLOGY OF THE SPAWN OF KYUSS

The journals of Anadan the Reader make for singularly depressing yet morbidly intriguing study. An enthusiastic member of the crusading knights known as the Scions of the Hale, Anadan's surprisingly literate account of his group's encounters with the unliving contain valuable information on the behavior, combat tactics, and weaknesses of no fewer than seven undead breeds. Unfortunately for Anadan, it was this seventh undead, the spawn of Kyuss, that would prove to be not only his end, but the end of the Scions of the Hale. The last several pages of his worm-eaten journal tell of how his company was ambushed by a group of these horrific monsters, and how their very appearance drove fear into the hearts of many of his companions. Those who fled the combat were the lucky ones—they were able to live the rest of their humbled lives as broken men. The three who stayed to fight, including poor Anadan, managed to destroy the spawn, only to succumb, one by one, to the worms that infested their bodies during the battle—worms that leapt and lunged from the undead flesh of their enemies to burrow hungrily into living meat.

Anadan tells of how one soldier cut off his own arm at the shoulder to try to stave off the gnawing approach of a worm, only to bleed to death as a result. The other man, Anadan's captain, fled into the mist-cloaked bog and for the next several pages, Anadan writes of how the man's screams grew more and more frantic and incoherent until they suddenly ceased. Throughout the entire account, Anadan writes of how he can feel the worms inside him burrowing through his body. Anadan was not lucky enough to have an arm to lop off. His worms swam through his torso, upward, into his neck. The reader can see in his text when the worms reached his brain, for his writing slowly grows sloppy, his ability to spell degrades, and his very vocabulary becomes stunted and almost illegible as the teeming intruders did their hungry work. His last words (for by this point he had apparently lost the skill to scribe complete

sentences) are particularly chilling: "...captain... back... he see me... drool... not drool... worm... chew... no... me live... not want die... hurt... hrrrtttt... hhungrrrieee..."

Scholars and priests often refer eager adventurers who inquire about the undead to the journals of Anadan the Reader, for if they aren't warned off by Anadan's doom, they might learn a thing or two about perhaps the most terrifying and relentless enemy they'll ever face.

HISTORY OF THE SPAWN

The spawn began with Kyuss, an ancient priest of a forgotten deity who ruled an empire before the advent of modern civilization. Little remains in writing of the details concerning Kyuss and his rule, but it seems clear his skill at creating undead was unsurpassed. Eventually, the necromancer-priest vanished into parts unknown, leaving in his wake an empire of the dead. Yet while relatively little information survives to inform the modern scholar about the man himself, of his spawn much has been documented.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPAWN OF KYUSS

The following table shows the results of a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (religion) check related to the spawn of Kyuss. Any cleric, graveyard keeper, or scholar of necromantic arts might know some or all of this information, although those who don't know the true nature behind these undead sometimes (unintentionally) spread inaccurate information about them (as evidenced by information provided for a DC of 10).

Knowledge (religion)

DC	Result
10	Some zombies are just plain harder to kill than others. You can tell the really tough ones by the worms that infest them. Their wounds close up as fast as you can hack them apart.
15	Worm-infested zombies are dangerous, for there's a good chance such a monster is in fact a spawn of Kyuss, a disease-festering menace whose writhing green worms can transform those they infest into undead horrors.
20	A spawn of Kyuss exudes a supernaturally potent aura of fear. Worse, their touch not only infects victims with a terrible disease known as Kyuss' gift, but it can also infest others with the worms that gnaw on their bodies. The touch of silver and deft hands might pluck these worms away before they burrow into a victim's brain.
25	Magic that removes curses or diseases can save someone infested with the worms of Kyuss even if they have reached the victim's brain. Such a magic effect directed at the spawn itself can transform all but the most powerful into normal zombies.
30	Some of Kyuss' spawn are much more powerful than the typical spawn and possess strange powers like the ability to exhale clouds of noxious grave wind or the ability to spray the surrounding area with infectious worms. Not all spawn of Kyuss are humanoid in shape and might infest a variety of natural and monstrous forms.

The first reports of free-willed spawn of Kyuss came from adventurers who dared explore a forgotten and shadowed spur of the great Rift Canyon. Known now as the Wormcrawl Fissure, this region is reputed to have once been the seat of Kyuss' power. Certainly, the area was infested with his spawn. Strangely enough, explorers in the Amedio Jungle to the south began to report encounters with identical creatures in the western reach of the jungles.

As time wore on, the spawn began to appear in other regions as well, usually in large urban areas. These spawn were spread deliberately by cultists who proclaimed that Kyuss himself had not vanished from the world. Indeed, they believed that he had become a god, and it was their duty to spread his spawn throughout the world to herald his imminent return.

NECROLOGY OF THE WORM

Like most undead, the spawn of Kyuss have a host of potent supernatural abilities. They radiate fear, they cause disease with a touch, and they heal damage to their undead flesh with shocking speed. Yet their most notorious and fearful aspect isn't properly a feature of their undead bodies at all, but is in fact the source of their scourge.

The green worms that infest each spawn of Kyuss are not themselves undead. Rather, they are a strange symbiotic form of vermin that subsists upon the decaying flesh of the spawn. The worms are voracious, but as fast as they consume the flesh of their host it regrows and replenishes. Theoretically, if a spawn of Kyuss could be separated from its infesting host, its fast healing would increase dramatically. Fortunately, the spawn themselves are inexorably tied to their wormy symbiots and without one the other quickly dies. The spawn's flesh provides sustenance for the worms, while the worms provide—in some unknown way—the animating energies the spawn requires to exist.

Scholars and necromancers have long been fascinated with these worms. None have managed to keep a spawn animate after harvesting its

worms but the reverse is a simple task. A Kyuss worm plucked from the body of its host can survive for several minutes before it melts into a reeking green stain. At one end, the worm is a gaping toothy hole of razor-sharp teeth set in concentric rings around the inside of the throat. A Kyuss worm on the ground is nearly helpless; it cannot slither, instead moving impotently by violently flopping its body. A Kyuss worm goes dormant indefinitely if stored in a *potion of gentle repose*, yet rumors hold that the cult of Kyuss has perfected methods of hiding worms in other liquids as well.

When a Kyuss worm contacts living flesh, it enters a state of violent excitement. The worm's mouth unfolds around itself, turning inside-out and prolapsing so that the teeth along its throat become concentric rings of outward-pointing teeth that take up half its length. These rings of teeth then twist back and forth with such ferocity that the worm can drill through flesh and even bone with nauseating swiftness, slithering through tissue like a metal screw through soft wood. Although itself mindless, the worm's lower reaches are sensitive to nervous tissue and can feel the transmission of pain created from its fleshly burrowing as it is transmitted through the nervous system to the victim's brain. The worm follows these transmissions like a roadmap, unerringly arriving in the creature's brain only a few moments later.

Once the worm reaches the brain, its mouth reverts to its normal state and it begins to consume, slithering its way at random through the victim's mind as it consumes his memories, personality, and horror-filled final thoughts. The victim soon dies and the worm immediately begins to multiply inside the body's now empty skull via an unnaturally swift asexual process. As the number of worms exceeds the skull's capacity, they burst from the victim's mouth, eyes, nose, and ears. It is at this moment that the supernatural vermin transform the body into a new spawn of Kyuss. Additional worms immediately begin feasting on the victim's flesh and organs, while the original clot of writhing symbionts remain lodged in the undead creature's skull. While individually unintelligent, the worms retain corrupted fragments of the original creature's intelligence and memories. This nest of worms serves the creature as an unholy replacement for the devoured brain. Although this hivemind usually possesses only a fraction of the original creature's intellect, it is more than enough to give the spawn of Kyuss a sinister cunning and drive it to spread its taint among new victims.

CREATING A SPAWN OF KYUSS

Any evil cleric can create a spawn of Kyuss by casting *create undead* as long as he is at least 15th level. The material component for creating a spawn of Kyuss, however, is slightly different than normal. This version of the spell must be cast over the grave

KYUSS

Demigod (Neutral Evil)

Once an obscure deity associated with creating and mastering the undead, Kyuss and his cult are rising in prominence with the coming of the apocalyptic Age of Worms. Classically, his appearance has been likened to a gaunt man with hands of bone and eye sockets filled with writhing worms, but many religious scholars believe that Kyuss has shed all remnants of his once mortal body, and is now composed entirely of a humanoid-shaped mass of writhing green worms.

Symbol: A human skull with green worms writhing from the eye sockets and jaw.

Portfolio: Creation and control of the undead, decay, unholy transformation of the flesh, worms.

Domains: Corruption*, Death, Destruction, Evil.

Favored Weapon: Club.

Clerical Training: New cultists must drink a *potion of inflict light wounds* that contains a preserved Kyuss worm in a deadly ritual known as First Ingestion.

Quests: Kyuss encourages his cultists to not only lure powerful individuals to his fold but to trick members of other cults and religions into furthering his unknowable goals.

Prayers: Servants of Kyuss offer their prayers on a personal level once a month in a rite involving the ingestion of living worms.

Temples: Huge subterranean cathedrals and tabernacles dedicated to Kyuss exist in remote locations far from civilized lands.

Rites: Kyuss' cult anticipates the return of their god, a time they call the Age of Worms. In preparation, cultists undertake a variety of vile missions ranging from the creation of spawn of Kyuss to world-spanning manipulations.

Herald and Allies: Kyuss' herald is a undead terror known as Dragotha, once a red dragon and consort to Tiamat. Kyuss most commonly sends demons that bear the favored spawn of Kyuss template in response to *planar ally* spells.

* Consult the *Book of Vile Darkness* (mature audiences only).

of a killer who was buried without a coffin in unhallowed ground (a DC 25 Knowledge [local] check can usually determine if such a body lies near a specific settlement). If the caster has a preserved or live Kyuss worm he may substitute that for the 250 gp black onyx gem that is otherwise required to animate the body. As the spell is cast, the grave blooms with worms and maggots as the newly created spawn of Kyuss rises from within. Favored spawn of Kyuss cannot be created with this spell or with *create greater undead*; the secrets of their creation reside only with Kyuss and his most trusted minions.

FAVORED SPAWN OF KYUSS

While the spawn of Kyuss are bearers and victims of their master's corruption, those who garner the demigod's favor are blessed by worms. Former fanatics, crazed visionaries, and purposefully sacrificed beasts, these favored spawn of Kyuss wreak his terrible will with an array of corruptive abilities. Found either alone or enslaved to the service of mad prophets, favored spawn take a vast array of forms and imply the demigod of worm's direct interest. In recent years appearances of the favored spawn have risen, evidencing the impending Age of Worms.

SAMPLE FAVORED SPAWN OF KYUSS

MASTIFF OF KYUSS **CR 3**

Favored spawn of Kyuss fiendish riding dog

CE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +6

Aura fear (DC 13, 40-ft. radius)

Language Abyssal

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17

hp 13 (2 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 5/silver

Immune undead traits

Resist cold 5, fire 5; **SR** 7

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee bite +5 (1d6+6 plus worm plus Kyuss' gift) or worm +5 touch (special)

Ranged worm +3 touch (special)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Atk Options smite good 1/day (+2 damage against good foes)

Special Atk create spawn

Abilities Str 19, Dex 15, Con —, Int 5, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ infested skin, turn resistance +3

Feats Alertness, Improved Unarmed Strike[B], Track[B]

Skills Jump +10, Listen +6, Spot +6, Swim +5, Survival +2 (+6 when tracking by scent)

Possessions masterwork spiked studded leather barding

An unnaturally mangy mastiff skulks forward, much of its fur and flesh having fallen away leaving gaping, diseased holes. A sickly green light streams from its empty eye sockets and strands of writhing green worms replace drool in equally copious ribbons.

Plague-spreading hunters and harbingers of the demigod of worms, mastiffs of Kyuss stalk the enemies of their master's favored servants. Tireless and riddled with deadly Kyuss worms, a single mastiff might range over hundreds of miles, inevitably striking a single target with

precision or seeding its god's ruinous corruption throughout an entire offending town.

COMBAT

Mastiffs of Kyuss are barely-thinking killers, slaves to the wills of their masters. Their method of combat varies greatly depending on their commands, using their create spawn ability, fighting alongside pack mates, or avoiding confrontations depending on their orders' dictates. Mastiffs without instructions, however, know only the compulsion to spread their god's taint and seek to use their create spawn ability as often as possible.

Create Spawn (Su): Once per round as a free action, a spawn of Kyuss can transfer a worm from its own body to that of an opponent. See the following template for a complete description of these effects.

Fear Aura (Su): A mastiff of Kyuss continuously radiates a fear effect. All creatures within a 40-foot radius must make a DC 13 Will save or be affected as if by the spell *fear*. Any creature that makes a successful saving throw against the effect cannot be affected again by the fear aura of the mastiff of Kyuss for 24 hours.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day a mastiff of Kyuss can make a normal melee attack to deal 2 extra points of damage against a good foe.

Infested Skin (Su): A mastiff of Kyuss is so infested with worms that any creature that strikes it with an unarmed strike, natural weapon, or light weapon must make a Reflex save or a Kyuss worm is transferred to the attacker's body. Any creature that shares the same square of the mastiff (such as might occur during a grapple, bull rush, or Tumble check) must make a Reflex save to avoid the same fate.

CREATING A FAVORED SPAWN OF KYUSS

"Favored Spawn of Kyuss" (known simply as the "favored" to cultists of Kyuss) is an inherited template that can be added to any living, corporeal creature. A favored spawn uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead. Do not recalculate Hit Dice, base attack bonus, or saves. Size is unchanged.

Special Attacks: A favored spawn retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attacks.

Create Spawn (Su): Once per round as a free action, a favored spawn of Kyuss can transfer a worm from its own body to that of an opponent. It can do this whenever it hits with a natural attack or an unarmed attack, but it can also make the transfer by means of a successful melee touch attack or a ranged touch attack, hurling a worm at a foe from a distance of up to 10 feet.

Each worm is a Fine vermin with AC 10 and 1 hit point. It can be killed with normal damage or by the touch of silver. On the spawn's next action, the worm burrows into its host's flesh. A creature with a natural armor bonus of +5 or better is immune to this burrowing effect. The worm makes its way toward the host's brain, dealing 1 point of damage per round for 1d4+1 rounds. At the end of that period, it reaches the brain. While the worm is inside a victim, a *remove curse* or *remove disease* effect destroys it, and a *dispel evil* or *neutralize poison* effect delays its progress for 10d6 minutes. A successful DC 20 Heal check extracts the worm and kills it.

Once the worm reaches the brain, it deals 1d2 points of Intelligence damage per round until it either is killed (by *remove curse* or *remove disease*) or slays its host (death occurs at 0 Intelligence). A Small, Medium, or Large

creature slain by a worm rises as a new spawn of Kyuss (not a favored spawn) 1d6+4 rounds later; a Tiny or smaller creature quickly putrefies, and a Huge or larger creature becomes a normal zombie of the appropriate size. Newly created spawn are not under the control of their creator, but they usually follow whatever favored spawn of Kyuss created them.

If a creature is infested with multiple worms, a single *remove curse* or *remove disease* destroys all the worms infesting the creature at once.

A favored spawn attacking a helpless opponent may use its foul embrace ability instead of this ability.

Fear Aura (Su): A spawn of Kyuss continuously radiates a fear effect. This ability functions like a *fear* spell (caster level 7th, Will save DC 14 + the favored spawn's Charisma modifier), except that it affects all creatures within a 40-foot radius. Any creature that makes a successful saving throw against the effect cannot be affected again by the fear aura of that favored spawn of Kyuss for 24 hours.

Foul Embrace (Su): By pressing its face against a helpless victim, the favored spawn of Kyuss can infest the victim with a rain of 2d6 worms. This ability is treated the same as the create spawn ability, but a victim slain by the resulting infestation rises as a favored spawn of Kyuss rather than a normal zombie.

Kyuss' Gift (Su): Any creature hit by a favored spawn of Kyuss' natural attack or unarmed attack must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or contract this supernatural disease. The incubation period is 1 day, and the disease deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage and 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. These effects manifest as rotting flesh and dementia. An affected creature gets only half the benefits of natural and magical healing, though a *remove disease* effect removes the affliction.

In addition to the previously described abilities, a favored spawn with 10 HD or more gains one of the following additional special attacks as a gift from Kyuss himself. Saving throws against these effects are against a DC of 10 + half the favored Spawn's Hit Dice + the favored spawn's Charisma modifier.

Infested Skin (Su): The favored spawn of Kyuss is so infested with worms that any creature that strikes it with an unarmed strike, natural weapon, or light weapon must make a Reflex save or a Kyuss worm is transferred to the attacker's body. Any creature that shares the same square as the favored spawn (such as might occur during a grapple, bull rush, or Tumble check) must make a Reflex save to avoid the same fate.

Noxious Breath (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, as a standard action, the favored spawn of Kyuss can exhale nauseating vapor from its mouth in a 15-foot cone. All creatures in this area must make a Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1d4 rounds.

Wormburst (Su): Once per day as a standard action, the favored spawn of Kyuss can expel a 10-foot-radius burst of worms from its body. All creatures in this area of effect must make a Reflex save or become infested by 1d6 Kyuss worms.

Special Qualities: A favored spawn retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains the following.

Damage Reduction (Ex): A favored spawn of Kyuss gains damage reduction 5/silver. If the favored spawn has 10 or more Hit Dice, this increases to damage reduction 10/silver.

Fast Healing (Ex): A favored spawn of Kyuss has fast healing 5.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A favored spawn of Kyuss has turn resistance +3.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha +2. Favored spawn are undead, and as such do not have a Constitution score.

Feats: A favored spawn of Kyuss gains Improved Unarmed Strike as a bonus feat.

Challenge Rating: +2 (for creatures with 9 HD or less) or +3 (for creatures with 10 HD or more).

Alignment: Always chaotic evil.

AGES OF WORMS

Kyuss and his spawn first appeared in official D&D terms in 1981's *Fiend Folio*. Designed by Michael MacDonald, the nigh-indestructible sons of Kyuss were created by the then priest Kyuss for his own dark purposes. Since then, Kyuss' influence and his namesake minions have spread, appearing in numerous campaign settings, adventures, bestiaries, and—most unexpectedly—as the name of the rock band Kyuss.

The minions of Kyuss have taken numerous forms since the *Fiend Folio*'s original sons of Kyuss, appearing most recently in the *Monster Manual II* as the spawn of Kyuss, in DRAGON #307 as the scion of Kyuss template, and in this article as the nauseating favored spawn of Kyuss template.

In all of their long history, though, the most epic of Kyuss' plots is unfolding now in DUNGEON's Age of Worms Adventure Path. As foul tidings coincide unlikely heroes stumble upon far-reaching plots of the foul demigod.

Further information about Kyuss, his various spawn and servitors, and their dark plots can be found every month in the pages of DUNGEON, DRAGON's ongoing "Wormfood" series, and the massive free *Age of Worms Overload PDF*, available at **paizo.com**.

AGE OF WORMS

by Jeremy Walker • illustrated by Eva Widermann

Wormfood

Surviving the Age of Worms Adventure Path

A Night on the Town: Entertainment in the Free City

While the pages of *Dungeon* magazine present everything a DM needs to run the Age of Worms Adventure Path, every month *Dragon* gives the players of that—or any other campaign—tools to enhance their gaming experience.

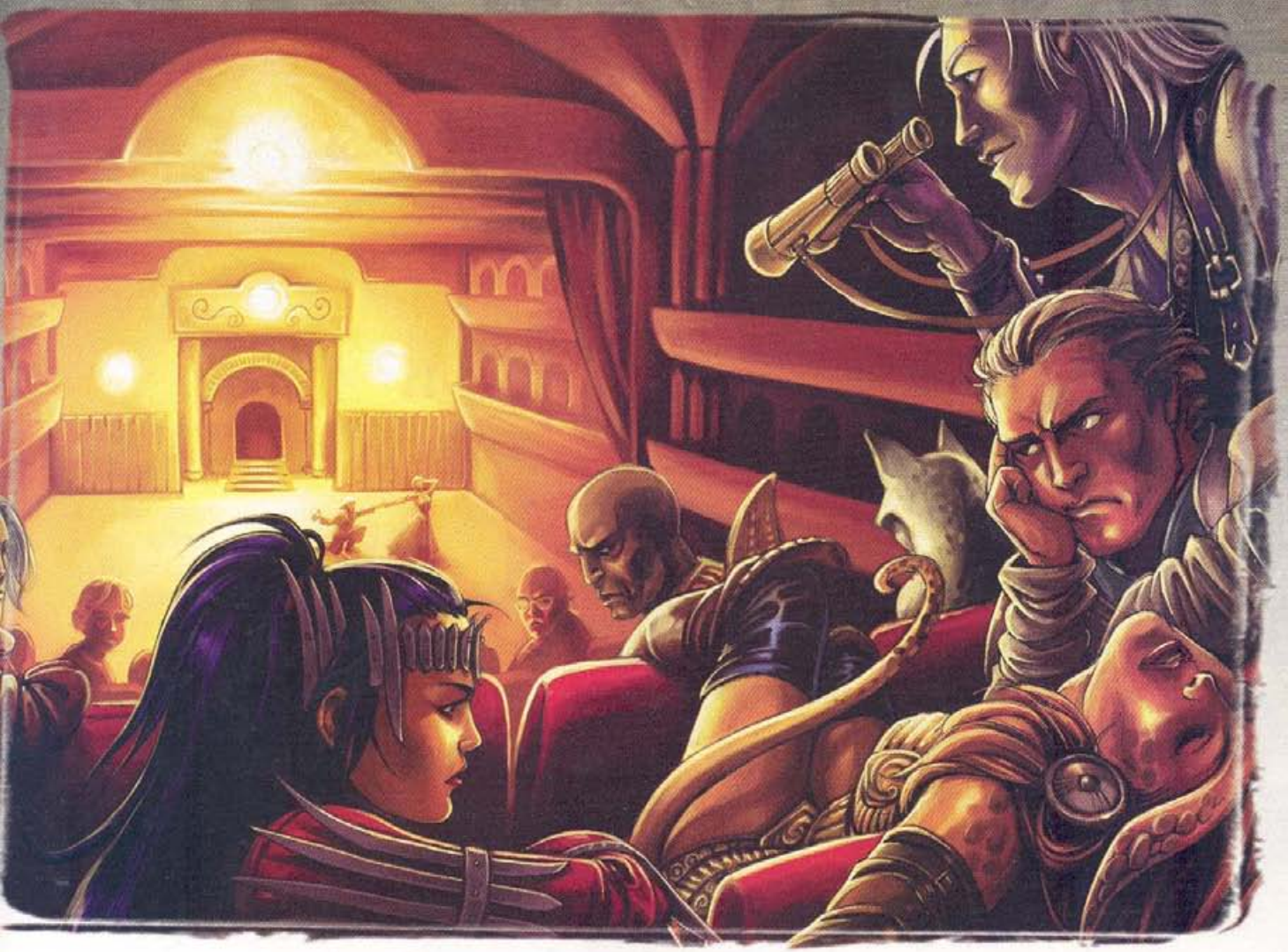
The stolid adventures from the hills polish off the pesky lizardfolk and march out of the wild. Fresh from their battles in the treacherous Mistmarsh, the grizzled band has finally reached its destination: the famous metropolis of wizards and thieves that is the fabulous Free City. Very likely, some of them have never seen a city before, much less one so diverse and grandiose. Before they are thrust into the midst of another exciting escapade, they might want to stop, catch their breaths, and explore their strange new surroundings. Here are a few places PCs might visit to get an introduction to life in the big city and a taste of their new surroundings. More ideas for possible people, places, and activities in a large city can be found in *Sharn: City of Towers* and *City of Splendors: Waterdeep.*

The Blueberry Theatre

PCs with slightly more refined tastes in entertainment might wish to visit the Blueberry Theatre. Known throughout the Free City for its edgy and often scathing political satire, the Blueberry attracts nobles, merchants, foreigners, and tradesmen dissatisfied with the current system or who wish to mock the administration. It is especially popular among the rebellious children of the nobility, many of whom go on to become adventurers.

Despite the fact that the Blueberry is despised in many of the most powerful quarters of the city, it nevertheless plays an important role as a stepping-stone for performers seeking to move from the raucous taverns of the poor quarters to the stately playhouses of the elite. For that reason, all of the most powerful theater companies in the city regularly send scouts to take in the performances at the Blueberry, looking for their next big star. The Blueberry is not quite as refined as these playhouses, however, and it is not unheard of for a poor performer to be driven off the stage by an onslaught of rotten vegetables.

The Blueberry is an excellent place to learn everything you want to know about the underhanded dealings and dirty little secrets of the nobility, mainly from their frustrated offspring. Any Gather Information, Knowledge (local), or Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check made concerning the aristocracy and public officials of the Free City during intermission at the Blueberry gets a +2 circumstance bonus.



Madame Goschild (CN female half-elf bard 5) runs the Blueberry. No one knows where she came from or what she did before she opened the theatre a decade ago, but most believe she hides secrets about the local authorities that prevent them from shutting her down. For her part, she knows exactly how far she can push the satire and never strays over the line. A night at the Blueberry Theatre costs 6 sp per person, not including refreshments.

THE CHECKERED CIRCLE

Far from the roaring crowds and the salivating fans of the Free City Arena, small-time fighters, wrestlers, gladiators, and monsters battle in the shadows for quick cash and a little glory. They gather in back alleys, shady taverns, and dark warehouses, forming underground fighting rings that are becoming increasingly popular with the bloodthirsty masses.

One of the most famous (or infamous) of these rings is the Checkered Circle. Named for its sign (a small circle of black and white checkered cloth) the Checkered Circle constantly moves from venue to venue in an attempt to avoid the attention of the city guards, who have been unsuccessfully trying to shut it down for years. What keeps it going—besides the large bribes paid to guardsmen to look the other way—is its ever-increasing popularity, especially among the lower class, who often lose large amounts of the little money they have betting on matches.

There are three ways PCs might become involved with the underground ring. If they happen to be looking for a more "primitive" form of entertainment, they can discover the location of the next fight with a DC 15 Gather Information check. Alternatively, if one of the PCs is gambling heavily at Honest Axebeard's or another gambling establishment in town, one of the other patrons might tell him about "an opportunity to make some real money" with a wink and a smile. Finally, a particularly large and powerful-looking PC might be offered the opportunity to "turn some of that muscle into cash," especially if he does well in a tavern brawl or in a tussle with one of the city guards.

Whether the PCs are there to fight or just watch, a night at the Checkered Circle always unfolds the same way. The fights take place

SPELLBONES

This relatively new game has gained increased popularity among the more affluent dice throwers in the Free City, largely due to its complexity. The basic game is very similar to Fireball (highest score on 5d6 wins) but has two important differences. First, each die that rolls a "6" is a "magic die." A "magic die" contributes no points toward a player's total (it is treated as a "0") but instead can be used to change the result of one of the player's other dice that did not roll a "6" to any number from 1 to 5.

The second major difference is that the players can create "creatures" by rolling different combinations of numbers. Any result that contains a creature automatically defeats a non-creature result. If two players both roll creatures, the more powerful creature wins. In the case of a tie, total the result of the player's leftover dice (not counting "6s") to break the tie. If they are still tied, the pot is split. The creatures are listed below in order of least powerful to most powerful:

Die Results	Creature Name
2,2	Stirge
4,4	Cockatrice
1,1,1	Otyugh
3,3,3	Griffon
5,5,5	Manticore
2,2,2,2	Gorgon
4,4,4,4	Roper
1,1,1,1,1	White Dragon
2,2,2,2,2	Black Dragon
3,3,3,3,3	Green Dragon
4,4,4,4,4	Blue Dragon
5,5,5,5,5	Red Dragon
6,6,6,6,6	Archmage

in a 30-foot-diameter circle marked off with chalk in the center of the crowd. The Circle usually meets in one of the empty warehouses scattered across the Free City's industrial and trade neighborhoods. The various bookies that run the ring accept bets on any fight up until the moment when Hairy Pete (a particularly ugly bugbear who has been doing the honor for years) drops the ceremonial kerchief at the center of the ring to signal the start of each fight. An unusually large goblin named **Thaddeus Tightfist** (CE male goblin rogue 7) runs the operation. Blessed with more than his fair share of cunning, Thaddeus makes a tidy profit from the miserable locals who bet on his fights. Stonefist, Thaddeus's shield guardian, referees the fights. Being a remarkably tough construct, he is able to withstand just about anything the combatants can dish out.

Brutal as they are, the fights have a few basic rules. No weapons, spellcasting, or magic items of any kind are allowed. Innate magical abilities (such as wildshape or a harpy's captivating song) are permitted, however. Thaddeus has a mage in his employ named **Pek Redrock** (CE male goblin adept 5) who monitors each fight with *detect magic* to ensure that the rules are being followed. Each fight lasts until one of the combatants either gives up (by tapping out, crying uncle, going limp, and so on) or is pushed (or thrown) outside the chalk ring drawn on the floor. Breaking the rules results in forfeit of the match, and possibly banishment from the Circle. Killing your opponent, while frowned upon, is not unusual. Prizes for the fights depend on the anticipation of the match and range anywhere from 25 gp up to well over 100 gp. New fighters are generally pitted against each other (the average new fighter is a male human warrior 2) until they develop reputations within the community, which usually takes about three fights. At that point, they start fighting other well-known champions (typically a male human warrior 5), or monsters dragged in from the countryside. Anyone who fights in the Circle long enough to earn a reputation gets a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks against other gladiators or fight fans within the Free City. A particularly successful fighter is likely to be recruited into the Free City arena to become a gladiator.

If your campaign instead takes place in EBERRON's Sharn, this location is instead known as the Burning Ring (see *Sharn: City of Towers* for further details).

HONEST AXEBEARD'S HOUSE OF DICE

The most popular gambling house in the foreign quarter, Honest Axebeard's caters to merchants, foreigners, adventures, and others rich enough to avoid the stinking hovels of the unwashed peasants but not wealthy enough to enjoy the perfumed chambers of the city's wealthy card rooms and dragonchess parlors. Located just off a central marketplace, Axebeard's features a large central gaming room filled with round dice tables as well as several smaller private dice rooms containing comfortable chairs, velvet-lined gaming surfaces, and carved gemstone dice. **Axebeard** (N male dwarf aristocrat 2/expert 6) rents these "Deluxury Suites" to private parties at the rate of 5 gp per hour.

While Axebeard collects a rake (5% of each pot goes back to the house) he makes most of his money by selling food, wine, ale, and other more exotic refreshments to his many patrons. The place generally sports a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, largely maintained by the establishment's many bouncers (each a human or half-orc warrior 4) that patrol the main room keeping a sharp eye out for troublemakers. As a result Axebeard's is an excellent place to Gather Information, and any checks made regarding nearby legends, local celebrities, and famous adventurers receive a +2 circumstance bonus. The house opens every evening two hours before sunset, and is always at least half full.

For those PCs interested in joining the action, tables can be found with standard bets ranging from 5 sp to 10 gp per throw. Each table generally has between three and five players. The standard games played are Knives (best throw on 3d6), Pitchforks (best throw on 4d6), and Fireball (best throw on 5d6). The most popular game at the tables, however, is Spellbones, a relatively recent invention that has nevertheless become widespread almost overnight (see the Spellbones sidebar).

JOSIEL'S BATHHOUSE

After a hard day's work, sometimes you just want to relax and unwind. For those who can afford the luxury, Josiel's Bathhouse offers the perfect combination of hot water and warm service to soothe even the most anxious guest. Although he calls it a "bathhouse," **Josiel** (male halfling expert 6) offers his clientele much more than just soap and hot water. Steam baths, massage parlors, pools of goat's milk, and other restoratives can all be found within this wooden-walled sanctuary. Furthermore, believing that cleansing and relaxing the mind is just as important as the body, Josiel's features an extensive meditation garden, with long rows of fragrant plants and even a few tame, well-cared-for animals within its walls, including a panther, a pair of peacocks, a dray of squirrels, and a black bear. These gardens are a favorite spot for monks and druids visiting the city who desire a few hours of meditation each day to maintain their focus or connection to the wild.

Although Josiel's services do not come cheap (there is an entry fee of 5 gp per visit) they are well worth the price. Anyone who includes a visit to Josiel's as part of his 8 hours of rest regains hit points as if he had spent 8 hours of complete bed rest, regardless of where he actually sleeps. Furthermore, the clean and healthy environment strengthens the body's natural defenses; any character who spends a few hours at Josiel's receives a +2 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saves made to resist disease for the next 24 hours.

WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

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DRAGON CRAG

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by Greg Marks • illustrated by Vincent Dutrait

CURIOS OF CORRUPTION

In the dark corners of a dusty curio shop lie unspeakable horrors. A disturbing shopkeeper smiles, watching from behind the counter, eager for shoppers to explore his wares. Amid dust-covered tomes and skulls of unknown creatures wait disturbing cephalopod figurines and wickedly curved daggers suggestive of fell purposes. Forgotten and forbidden, great power awaits any who take up these foul items... if they dare suffer the price.

BLASPHEMOUS FIGURINES OF THE VOID

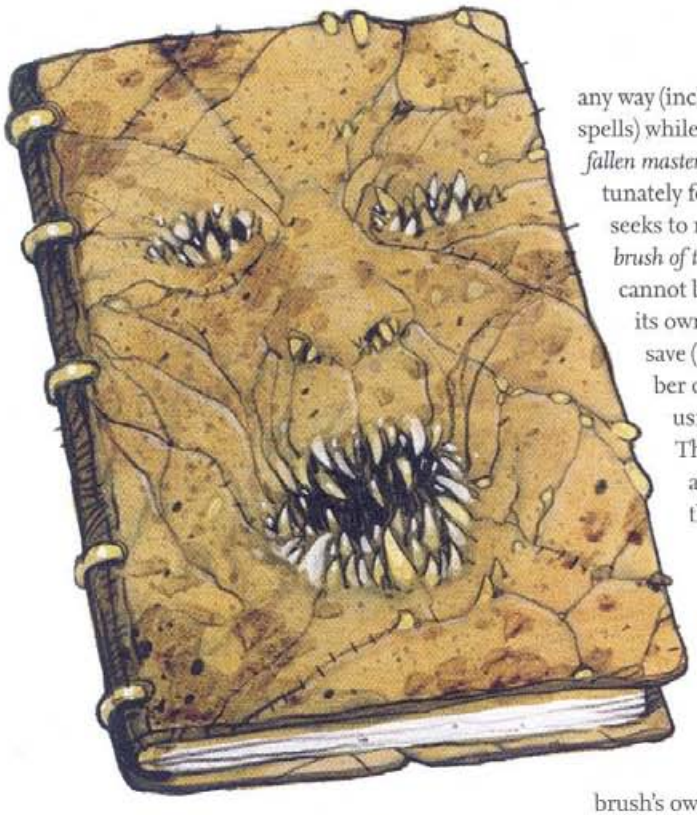
Four disturbingly carved jade figurines in a black velvet bag comprise this complete set. Each of the figurines bestows a different blessing upon its wielder when held in hand and its name is spoken. Each *blasphemous figurine of the void* can be invoked only once per day, and the user can have the blessings of only one figurine at a time. All four figurines must be stored together in the same black velvet bag or they cannot be recharged and used the next day.

Alintyl, the Corruptor: By invoking this cephalopodan figurine, the user gains a suave manner and a silver tongue. When activated, Alintyl grants a +5 profane bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks for 1 hour.

Ilanserbli, the Seductress: Activating this porcine figurine fills the user with lustful thoughts that he can pass on to others with a touch. Ilanserbli grants the ability to cast *charm person* once per day as a 5th-level sorcerer with a duration of 1 hour and a range of touch. Those charmed by the power of Ilanserbli seek to woo the user, desiring the user even to their detriment.

Nolanlor, the Devourer: Triggering the power of this avian figurine brings forth the great hunger of Nolanlor. Nonmagical food and water within 30 feet of the user permanently spoils and become unfits for consumption. Potions and other magical foods are not affected. So great is Nolanlor's hunger that it even devours light, plunging the user into *darkness*, as per the spell. These effects last for 1 hour.

Vandommezeron, the Destroyer: Calling upon this furry apelike figurine fills the activator with a furious *rage*, as per the spell cast by a 5th-level wizard.



Faint enchantment, evocation, and transmutation; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *charm person, darkness, rage;* Price 14,000 gp; Weight 2 lb.

BRUSH OF THE FALLEN MASTER

Originally created by Xerith Blasitil, a powerful demonologist who envied the skills of talented artists, the *brush of the fallen master* has not seen use for centuries. Xerith sold his soul to create the *brush of the fallen master,* and his desire to wield it eventually claimed his life. This fine paintbrush bears an elegant darkwood handle and a golden setting holds fine blond bristles taken from the head of a murdered elven prince.

Given suitable raw materials (such as paints and a canvas), the *brush of the fallen master* allows its user to create beautiful masterpieces, bestowing a +20 competence bonus on the user's Craft (painting) skill checks. However, every time the brush is used to create a painting, it bestows one negative level upon the user. Negative levels acquired in this way remain as long as the painter keeps the brush and disappear when the *brush of the fallen master* is permanently discarded. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the *brush of the fallen master* is owned. Unfortunately for anyone who seeks to rid himself of a *brush of the fallen master,* it cannot be discarded unless its owner makes a Will save (DC 20 + the number of paintings created using the brush). This save cannot be attempted more than once per day. Once a painter uses the *brush of the fallen master* he feels a desire to continue creating more paintings. Once per week, if the brush's owner has not begun painting a new piece he must make a Will save (DC 20 + number of weeks since last painting with the brush) or be compelled to start a new painting and therefore gain another negative level.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *enervation;* Price 20,000 gp; Weight —.

CARNIVOROUS TOME

The front cover of this large dusty tome bares a poorly tanned and stretched humanoid face, with jagged teeth protruding from the mouth, nostrils, and eyes. Only half of the 101 pages bear any writing, and each of those offers the detailed physical description of an individual inscribed in Infernal.

This disgusting tome makes an insidious trap for book thieves. When activated, the *carnivorous tome* rests among other books and alters its appearance to fit in with nearby tomes. If a creature touches the *carnivorous tome* without first speaking the command word, the tome immediately animates, its mouth suddenly taking on a dark sheen that glows a pale sea-green and rasping as if taking a dead breath with ancient, dust-filled lungs. The creature touching the tome risks becoming trapped within its pages, sucked in by the drawing breath of the cover's mouth. The creature must succeed at a DC 23 Will save or be imprisoned within the book, his description immediately appearing on one of the blank pages. Once all the pages are filled, the book no longer animates when touched and acts as a simple book of descriptions.

If a page is burned or otherwise destroyed the creature described on that page is lost and can only be returned to life by a *miracle* or *wish* spell. Destroying the entire book affects all the creatures trapped within. Speaking the command word and reading a description frees the creature from its imprisonment.

Strong abjuration; CL 17th; Craft Wondrous Item, *trap the soul;* Price 150,000 gp; Weight 5 lb.

FIENDISH ELIXIR

Housed in a black crystal bottle with a long fluted neck, this elixir is created from the corrupted blood of a celestial. Most commonly found among mortals allied with fiends or who otherwise embrace the powers of the Lower Planes, the power of the *fiendish elixir* activates upon consuming the enchanted blood.

A character imbibing the *fiendish elixir* gains a +5 circumstance bonus on Fortitude saving throws against poison, acid and cold resistance 5, a +2 natural armor bonus, and a +2 enhancement bonus to Strength. In addition, the drinker gains 5 points of damage reduction dependant upon his alignment. A lawful drinker gains DR 5/silver, a chaotic drinker gains DR 5/cold iron, and a drinker neither chaotic or lawful gains DR 5/magic. All of the elixir's effects last for 1 hour. While under the effect of *fiendish elixir,* the drinker gains the extraplanar and evil subtypes, with all their benefits and penalties, regardless of the drinker's actual type or alignment.

Moderate transmutation; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *polymorph;* Price 5,000 gp; Weight 1/2 lb.

MASK OF ENDLESS LAUGHTER

Created to bring joy into the hearts of children, the *mask of endless laughter* was corrupted by the taint of evil. This harlequin mask of white porcelain straps over the wearer's face using colorful ribbons that tie behind the head. While wearing the mask, the user gains a +2 enhancement bonus to his Charisma score and a +5 competence bonus on Perform (comedy) skill checks. Anyone who witnesses a performance given by the mask's wearer must make a DC 13 Will save or suffer the effects of *Tasha's hideous laughter* for the duration of the performance, regardless of the Perform skill used.

The mask comes with a price, however. If removed, the wearer must make a DC 23 Will save or die in 1d4 rounds as a seizure of laughter overcomes him. A *break enchantment, miracle, remove curse,* or *wish* spell cast during the seizure ends it and prevents the wearer from dying.

Faint enchantment; CL 5th; Craft Wondrous Item, *Tasha's hideous laughter;* Price 24,500 gp; Weight 1 lb.

PARASITIC TWIN

This ruddy lump of non-descript flesh feels warm to the touch and shows no signs of rot regardless of how long it sits. Anyone consuming this piece of flesh grows a second head from her left shoulder within 1d6 days. Once consumed, only a *heal* or *remove disease* cast within the first 24 hours prevents the second head from forming.

The second head is physically similar to the primary head, although often slightly smaller and more malignant in appearance. The parasitic twin possesses the same Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores as its host, as well as the same alignment portion relating to law and chaos (but it is always evil). It speaks any languages the host does, as well as Abyssal and Infernal. The parasitic twin also has 10 ranks in Knowledge (arcane), Knowledge (religion), and Knowledge (the planes). It possesses no other skill ranks, cannot make attacks, and cannot cast spells. It can, however, make untrained skill checks that do not require a body, such as Bluff or Listen. These languages and skill ranks belong to the parasitic twin and do not aid the host in qualifying for prestige classes. The parasitic twin has no control of the body beyond its own head and neck. Any spell effect suffered by the host also affects the parasitic twin, but the twin cannot be slain without removing it or killing the host. The parasitic twin can only be removed by cutting it from the host, a process that deals 10d6 points of damage to the host.

The parasitic twin chooses to aid the host solely based upon its never-ending quest to corrupt the host to evil and the worship of dark powers. Every small concession the host makes might earn her some useful piece of information or a few hours of cooperation from the parasitic twin. While the parasitic twin prefers to allow the host to corrupt herself, once per week it can force the host to make a DC 20 Will save or perform an evil act. This might eventually result in an alignment change. Those who are already evil or who embrace the dark gifts offered by the parasitic twin quickly find themselves a very close ally.

Any attack that would affect only the user's head (such as a vorpal weapon) has a 50% chance of affecting the parasitic twin instead. If the effect targets the user's actual head it affects him as normal. The parasitic twin then gains control of the body.

Strong conjuration; CL 13th; Craft Wondrous Item, *regenerate,* creator must be evil; Price 91,000 gp; Weight 1/2 lb.

SACRIFICIAL KNIFE

The hilt of the *sacrificial knife* is cast as an open-mouthed serpent, the dull wavy blade forming its tongue. A dark ruby the size of an acorn rests at the end of the serpent's tail, forming the pommel.

Thin and poorly balanced, this +1 *dagger* imposes a –2 penalty on attack rolls when used as a weapon. The purpose of the *sacrificial knife* becomes clear when brought near a helpless living creature, as a deep red glow begins to emanate from within the pommel and a faint hissing noise becomes audible. If used in a coup de grace attempt, plunging the blade into the heart of the helpless living creature, the sacrificial knife casts *death knell* on the target creature, benefiting the wielder.

Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *death knell;* Price 14,302 gp; Weight 1 lb.

STAFF OF NIGHTMARES

Bleached bones held together by dried sinew and spiked chains create this morbid staff. The *staff of nightmares* allows the use of the following spells:

- *Scare* (1 charge)
- *Fear* (2 charges)
- *Nightmare* (2 charges)
- *Phantasmal killer* (2 charges)
- *Symbol of fear* (3 charges)
- *Weird* (4 charges)

Strong illusion and necromancy; CL 17th; Craft Staff, *fear, nightmare, phantasmal killer, scare, symbol of fear, weird;* Price 51,000 gp; Weight 5 lb.

The Demonomicon of Iggwilv

BY OWEN K.C. STEPHENS AND GARY HOLIAN
ILLUSTRATED BY MATT DIXON

Favored of fiends, dark gods, and seemingly magic itself, few mortals have known the heights of arcane prowess, plane-spanning dread, and sheer power achieved by the archmage Iggwilv. Rumored to have created countless spells, mothered demigods, and rebuked princes of the Abyss, the Witch Queen has become a legend as dark as her ambitions. Although facts regarding her history sometimes prove rare, throughout her life Iggwilv conquered nations, enslaved demon princes , and—perhaps most notoriously—authored the infamous *Demononicon*.

Six copies of the *Demonomicon of Iggwilv* are known to exist, all of which have traded hands countless times. In addition to a selection of spells supposedly created by the Witch Queen, each also includes information on various evil outsiders, including descriptions of many and research into their truenames. Iggwilv used these books as her primary repository of demonic knowledge, usually taken from her personal interactions with these fiends. Although the spells contained within each copy of the *Demonomicon* are consistent, each describes a different host of demons and research into their profane existances. These demonic catalogs were lynchpins of Iggwilv's dominance over creatures from the Lower Planes, and many wizards have sought to equal that power by gaining access to all six tomes. As yet, none have succeeded.

Presented here are the unique spells found in every *Demonomicon of Iggwilv*, many of which work in conjunction with the spells *magic circle* and *planar binding*. Any spellcaster capable of making use of a *Demonomicon* gains considerable influence over otherworldly creatures but also immediately becomes a target, as both evil outsiders and power-hungry

demonologists seek to take the legendary tome for themselves.

Iggwilv, Creator of the Demonomicon

Iggwilv, the Mother of Witches and the Queen of Night, hails from the world of Greyhawk. With powers on par with those of a quasi-deity, many believe in her divine nature and worship Iggwilv as the dark matron of sorcery. Some obscure northern lore even hints that she is the issue of the witch Baba-Yaga herself. As mother of the demigod Iuz, she is the most infamous distaff member of a long roll of villains who relentlessly threaten Oerth and many other worlds.

Iggwilv's first confirmed appearance was nearly three centuries ago in the western borderlands known as al-Ket, although she was known then as Hura. The witch ensconced herself in a tower on the outskirts of the City of Lopolla for many years, conducting varied vile investigations. Her plunder of the Vault of Daoud proved one outrage too many, though, and the people of these devout lands saw her hounded from her stronghold into exile.

Cast out, she eventually settled in the blossoming City of Greyhawk about two centuries ago, where she came to the attention of its mysterious lord and benefactor Zagig Yragerne, who scandalously took the sorceress as an apprentice. Training at the feet of the master, Iggwilv learned of the denizens of the outer planes, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Together, the Mad Wizard and feared witch audaciously succeeded in summoning and binding the demon lord Fraz-Urb'Luu. Craving the power to accomplish this feat alone, Iggwilv absconded with many of Zagig's creations, including his prized *Tome of Zyx*. Refining its arcane formulae, she renamed the tome with the infamous title, *Demonomicon*.

Iggwilv returned with her plunder to the Yatil Mountains in the west, where she claimed a long lost dungeon created by the ancient wizard Tsojcanth. Within these caverns she set about her labors and after many fits and starts succeeded beyond her wildest dreams, imprisoning the powerful demon lord Graz'zt. At first he was enraged, but Iggwilv beguiled him, coaxing the demon into an agreement that might one day win him his freedom. The two became lovers and before long a child was born. Graz'zt imparted knowledge and gifts that increased Iggwilv's power greatly (see "Fiend's Embrace" in *Dungeon* #121) and eventually she sought dominion over the whole territory around her abode. Her handsome young son, Iuz, now of age, led her armies into the field, claiming large swaths of Perrenland under his mother's banner. For a decade Iggwilv ruled with terror, accumulating vast wealth and power. During this time she gave birth to a second child, a daughter whom she named Drelzna, although the girl almost certainly did not belong to Graz'zt.

Discontented with her empire, Iggwilv soon sought to extend her realm to encompass the despised lands of Ket, and Graz'zt suspected that he would never be released. Waiting for a moment of weakness, the demon lord turned upon the witch. An epic battle ensued, forcing Iggwilv to expend every spell, artifact, and ally she could employ, and although she ultimately slew Graz'zt—banishing him to the Abyss for 100 years—her power crumbled. Iuz suffered the worst from his parents' battle, his comely form shattered into two—one decrepit and manikinlike, the other red-skinned, hulking, and demonic.

Weakened, Iggwilv abandoned the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth and, with her son, fled north. There, she helped Iuz gain power but soon left her son behind and departed those lands, during which she was finally lured into the Abyss. There she became a prisoner of Graz'zt for a time, but eventually escaped and returned to Oerth. It took decades for Iggwilv to sufficiently regain her power and launch a new gambit in the Flanaess, building the alliances needed to lead an army of the lower planes. However, a powerful fiend-banishing artifact called the *Crook of Rao* was turned against her,

POWERS OF THE DEMONOMICON

Scribed by the mother of tyrants, present during some of the darkest acts in history, and detailing some of the most powerful evil beings in existence, few creations bear such a dark heritage as the *Demonomicon of Iggwilv*. Each of the six copies of this fell tome is a lesser artifact, and while their contents differ, the powers they possess are the same. The bearer of a copy of the *Demonomicon* casts all spells with the evil descriptor as if he were +5 caster levels higher. Also, the owner gains a +5 bonus on Charisma checks made as part of a *planar binding* or similar conjuration spell if the spell's target is a demon, and a +3 bonus if the target is any other type of evil outsider.

In addition, the first five pages of each *Demonomicon* are blank. Each page functions as a gem suitable for the purposes of casting spells like *magic jar*, *minimus containment*, or *trap the soul* that bind souls or whole forms into them (but no other spells). These pages are not destroyed when used as the material component of a spell and may be reused multiple times. If a soul or creature is trapped within one of these pages, a distorted shadowy face reminiscent of the bound being's visage appears upon the parchment. Although this image does not move while being directly scrutinized, it changes whenever the tome is closed or unattended. Creatures trapped within the *Demonomicon* are aware of their surroundings but cannot directly interact with them. However, the creature with the highest HD bound within a *Demonomicon* may, once per day, use the spell *dream* on any creature who has touched the tome within the last 24 hours. Trapped beings can also be contacted and conversed with through the use of spells like *detect thoughts* or *Rary's telepathic bond*.

Strong conjuration [evil]; CL 18th; Weight 3 lb.

NEW SPELLS IN THE DEMONOMICON OF IGGWILV

The six copies of the *Demonomicon of Iggwilv* are heavy, brass-bound tomes with parchment pages and powerful clawed claps. Dark covers crafted from the leather of some long-forgotten abyssal horror and sinewy bindings protect the profane lore within each. In addition to its unique spells and a number of other spells with the evil descriptor, each book contains the truenames of 4d6 evil outsiders of CR 1 to 12, and 1d6 evil outsiders of CR 13 or higher. The exact evil outsiders named vary, as old names are erased and new ones are added by various owners. These names hold significant value by themselves, but prove most valuable when combined with the spells within the *Demonomicon*.

For purposes of the following spells, any reference to *planar binding* spell includes the spells *lesser planar binding* and *greater planar binding* (see page 261 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

5th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Dolor: Cause a creature trapped in a *planar binding* pain, compelling it to agree to some service.

6th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Ensnarement: Augment the effectiveness of a *magic circle* prior to casting *planar binding*.

7th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Exaction: Make a sacrifice to gain bonuses when trying to compel service from a creature in a *planar binding*.

Torment: Similar to *dolor* but causes greater pain.

8th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spell

Minimus Containment: Bind a creature from a *planar binding* into a gem.

9th-Level Sorcerer/Wizard Spells

Imbrue: Bind a creature from a *planar binding* into a living host.

Implore: Call and trap an elemental or outsider of 24 HD using its true name.

giving her son Iuz the opening he needed to strike and spread his Empire of Tyranny across the northern Flanaess. Since that defeat, Iggwilv watches from behind the scenes, helping her godling son when it suits her, but preparing alliances for the day when she might once again return to the fore.

Iggwilv possesses many guises, all of them female, although her favorite is that of an alluring vixen. Her true form, however, is thought to be that of a wrinkled crone, although none live who have ever seen it. Aside from a love-hate relationship with Graz'zt, the Witch Queen retains many allies, including the yugoloth Tul-oc-luc, the demons Zuggtmoy and Demogorgon, and the feared wizard Tuerny the Merciless. Chief among her enemies are the Circle of Eight and their allies, who watch vigilantly for signs of her return.

Dolor

Evocation [Evil]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 3 rounds
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 24 hours

You draw upon the power of a *planar binding* to imbue your words with great arcane power, causing pain to creatures caught within. This power has no effect on creatures not caught in a *planar binding* spell cast by you. Because your voice causes captured creatures strong discomfort, you gain a bonus on all opposed Charisma checks made to compel the target of your *planar binding* to perform some service. This bonus is equal to +1 per three caster levels. For example, a 9th-level caster would gain a +3 bonus on Charisma checks made to influence the subject of his *planar binding* spell, while a 17th-level caster would gain a +5 bonus.

Using *dolor* poses two risks. First, the creature you compel using *dolor* is more likely to try to maliciously corrupt the intent of your commands and later seek revenge (how this occurs is decided by the DM). Secondly, because this spell ties you more directly to the power of the *planar binding*, if the result of your opposed Charisma check is a natural 1, not only does the creature escape (see the *lesser planar binding* spell on page 261 of the *Player's Handbook*), but you are automatically affected for a number of rounds equal to the escaped creature's Hit Dice as if it had successfully cast *charm monster* on you.

Ensnarement

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Touch
Area: 10-ft.-radius circle
Duration: Instantaneous

Casters use this spell to augment the power of *magic circles* prepared for use with *planar binding*. By inscribing a circle of entrapping runes in a 10-foot radius, any *magic circle* cast upon the same area within the next hour is made more potent. Creating this initial circle requires a DC 25 Spellcraft check, which the DM makes in secret. You may take 10 on this check if not rushed or threatened, but may not take 20. If the check fails the *ensnarement* has no effect. There is no outward sign of this failure.

A *magic circle* augmented by *ensnarement* is more effective when used in conjunction with *planar binding* spells in three ways. First, the called creature automatically acts as if a *dimensional anchor* spell had been successfully cast on it for as long as it is within the *magic circle*. Second, any time you are forced to make an opposed Charisma check against a creature bound into a *magic circle* you have enhanced with this spell you may use your Intelligence modifier rather than your Charisma modifier. Third, you gain a +4 bonus on all caster level checks made to overcome the spell resistance of a creature bound into the *magic circle* enhanced by your *ensnarement*.

Material Component: Powdered onyx worth at least 1,000 gp, which is used to draw the required diagrams.

Exaction

Enchantment (Compulsion)[Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One elemental or outsider caught in a *planar binding*
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

With this spell, you can make a sacrifice to a creature caught within a *planar binding* spell in an effort to win its willing service. This power has no effect on creatures not caught in a *planar binding* spell, although it can be used to gain a service from a creature caught in a *planar binding* created by a different spellcaster. The effort to win the target's service is handled by an opposed Charisma check just as for a *planar binding* spell (see *lesser planar binding*), with the following exceptions. First, if you win the Charisma check, the creature's service is granted willingly and to the full extent of your intentions, preventing the target creature from taking revenge later or trying to subvert the intent of its instructions. Second, completing the service does not free the target if it has agreed to multiple services as a result of multiple *exaction* spells (see below).

You must make a sacrifice as part of the negotiation represented by *planar binding's* opposed Charisma check.

Each sacrifice grants a Charisma bonus on efforts made to compel the target's service. Sacrifices can be negligible, minor, moderate, or major, each with increasingly higher costs and Charisma bonuses. These costs do not vary, cannot be resisted, and cannot be healed through the use of magic less powerful than *miracle* or *wish* (for example, alignment changed by a moderate sacrifice cannot be restored through the use of *atonement*, while a loved one killed in a major sacrifice cannot be brought back to life by a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell).

While negligible, minor, and moderate sacrifices are largely set (although DMs might wish to create alternatives), what connotes a major sacrifice varies from person to person. Major sacrifices always extol a great loss of significance to you and often others, as you betray information or perform acts that compromise your very being. Essentially, this means giving up part of your soul to the bound creature. Common examples of such offerings would be the sacrifice of a loved one, a major holy relic of a religious order you're a part of, your entire library of magical texts, or your beloved ancestral home. Overall, you and the DM should agree upon whom or what constitutes an appropriate major sacrifice.

Sacrifice Level	Example Sacrifice	Penalty	Cha bonus
Negligible	Sacrifice items of value to the target	50 gp/HD of target	+2
Minor	Pay worship to the target's power	100 XP/HD of target	+4
Moderate	Sacrifice a sentient being	Change alignment one step closer to the target	+6
Major	Sacrifice a part of your soul	Lose one level	+12

Imbrue

Conjuration (Summoning)
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One elemental or outsider caught in a *planar binding*
Duration: 1 day/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell attempts the dangerous and near unthinkable feat of binding a creature trapped within a *planar binding* spell inside a mortal host. This spell only functions if the target agrees to submit to the spell as a service you compel it to perform (see *lesser planar binding*). The target must be aware of this spell's effects and agree to its duration. Convincing a creature to submit to *imbrue* is difficult at best and has inherent dangers (see below). You take a –4 penalty on the opposed Charisma check made to compel the target to accept *imbrue* as its service.

If you roll a 1 on the Charisma check to compel the target to accept this spell the target breaks free of the binding and can escape or attack you as normal. Alternatively, if it so wishes, it may take control of your body for a number of days equal to its Hit Dice. At the end of this time it leaves your body and may return home or stay on the current plane.

If the target creature fails the opposed Charisma check and thus agrees to the spell, it is bound to a host, being either you or another willing creature within range. The host must be a living creature with an Intelligence and Wisdom of at least 6. If subject to *detect magic*, the host emanates an aura of conjuration magic with a caster level equal to the bound creature's HD. In addition, the host detects as being of the same alignment as the bound creature (with an aura strength equal to the bound creature's HD) rather than of his own.

While fettered to its host, the bound creature cannot be found by any mundane or magical means, including any form of magical scrying. It does not age and cannot be affected by any damage, magic, or psionic abilities. If the host creature dies, it is released and immediately returns to its home plane. In addition, this allows bound creatures to pass through areas that might normally prevent them from entering, such as through a *magic circle* (although, it cannot be released into an area that is warded against summoned creatures of its alignment). The host can dismiss the bound creature back to its home plane at any point prior to the end of the spell's duration.

Playing host to a bound creature has some advantages. First, the host has access to all the bound creature's Intelligence-based skills. This does not allow the host to read the bound creature's mind or discover secrets it knows—he simply makes such skill checks using the bound creature's total bonus. For example, a host with a nalfeshnee bound to him could use the creature's Intelligence-based skills (Knowledge [arcana] +23, Search +23, Spellcraft +25 [+27 with scrolls]) instead of his own. The DM determines what Knowledge skills creatures like a succubus (with Knowledge [any one]) or glabrezu (with Knowledge [any two]) possess.

Second, if the host is subject to sufficient damage or an effect that kills him (any magical or mundane damage that would reduce the host to –10 hit points or otherwise kill him outright), the host has a chance to allow the bound creature to absorb the fatal damage or effect. This requires the host to make a DC 30 Will save. The host, however, gains a bonus when making this save equal to the total HD of the bound creature. On a successful check, the fatal damage or effect acts as if it had targeted the bound creature, having no effect on the host and stabilizing him if he is dying. On a failed check the host takes the damage or effect as normal. In either case, the *imbrue* ends and the bound creature immediately returns to its home plane.

Finally, the greatest advantage of *imbrue* is its ability to essentially smuggle outsiders or elementals within a living host. As a standard action the

THE DEMONOMICON OF KRESTIBLE

Recently, the constabulary of the trade town of Krestible, a small city once among those controlled by the Witch Queen Iggwilv, raided the warehouse sanctuary of a cult of sinister infernalists. What they found instead of cultists was a scene of indescribable carnage and, amid the gore, a black-bound tome emanating a palpable dread. Examined by wizards in the guards' employ, this foul text has been identified as a copy of the foul *Demonomicon of Iggwilv*. Since its discovery, dark dreams have filled the minds of the people of Krestible and the city's nights have been alive with dreadful forms.

The *Demonomicon* recently found in Krestible is typical of its brethren in many ways. A vrock is magically bound into its first page by the spell *minimus containment*. This vrock, who calls himself Razfeth, is a canny demon and delights in meddling in the minds of mortals through the use of the book's *dream* ability. Besides the demon, the soul of an ancient and nameless nobleman is also trapped within the *Demonomicon*. This pitiable figure went mad centuries ago and does little more than scream and pleas for his release to any who listen.

Aside from the presences trapped within, the Krestible *Demonomicon* also contains the truenames of numerous demons (see the article "True Names and Fetishes" in *Dragon* #317). Among them are the thoroughly insane quasit Kramvilshanki, the ebon-skinned succubus Amquessol, identical twin bebiliths Chr'rt and Vr'rsst, and the obese—even for his kind—nalfeshnee, Rwarurgar'ekbluroo. In addition to directly documenting these names, the Krestible *Demonomicon* holds a number of expansive treaties on the ambitions, domains, cults, and servants of several Abyssal personalities. The most notable of these figures are Fraz-Urb'luu (see DRAGON #333), Juiblex (see the *Book of Vile Darkness*, mature audiences only), Pazuzu (see DRAGON #329), and Zuggtmoy (see DRAGON #337).

host can unleash the bound creature into an adjacent space (or closest open space if no adjacent spaces are available). Upon being released, the bound creature follows the directions of the host for a number of rounds equal to the host's HD plus his Charisma modifier. After this period the creature returns to its home plane.

There are side effects to hosting an elemental or outsider as the result of an *imbrue*. First, the bound creature sees and hears everything the host sees or hears, making it impossible for the host to keep secrets from it for the duration of the spell. Further, the bound creature is able to speak to its host and weaken the host's ability to focus. The host takes a –4 penalty on all Concentration checks, as well as all Will saves against mind-affecting spells for the duration of this spell.

Implore

Conjuration (Calling)
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V, S, XP
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One elemental or outsider with 22 HD or less
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: No and yes; see text

Implore acts as *greater planar binding* except as noted above and as follows. Any spells or effects that affect *planar binding* also work upon this spell. To cast *implore*, you must know the truename of the creature targeted and that specific creature is summoned. The target creature takes a –4 penalty on all Will saves and Charisma checks made while trapped within the spell. If it is compelled to provide some service (see *lesser planar binding*), it makes no effort to subvert instructions it is given regarding that service.

Every time you call a specific target using *implore* the creature gains a cumulative +1 bonus on future Will saves to resist your summons. These bonuses fade if you do not summon the creature for a full year.

XP Cost: 50 XP per Hit Die of the target called.

Minimus Containment

Conjuration (Summoning)
Level: Sor/Wiz 8
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One willing elemental or outsider caught in a *planar binding*
Duration: Permanent; see text
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

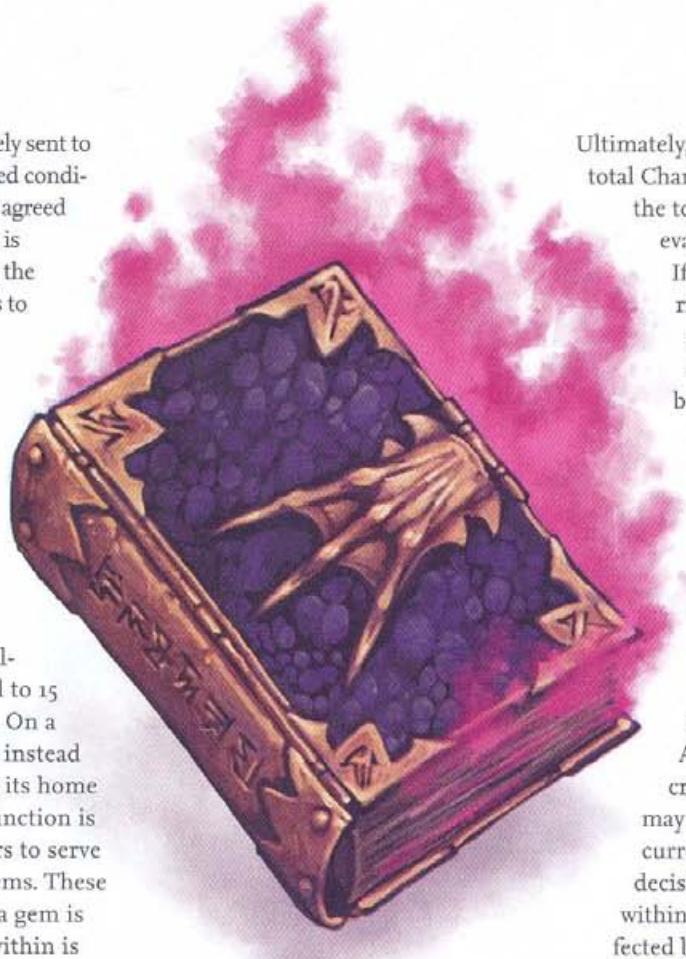
Minimus containment can only be cast on a creature already trapped in a *planar binding* spell, and only if that creature agrees to submit to the spell as a service you compel it to perform (see *lesser planar binding*). The target must be aware of and have agreed to the exact terms set by the *minimus containment* when it consents to the spell, and these conditions cannot be changed.

Minimus containment binds the spirit and material body of the target elemental or outsider into a gem (the focus), in a manner similar to a *trap the soul* spell. The gem then detects as a magic item (exhibiting conjuration magic with a caster level equal to the target's HD), but there is no way to identify the magic property of the gem (not even *identify* or *analyze dweomer* reveals the presence of the trapped creature). The bound creature remains within the gem for a certain period of time or until a specified condition is met (set by you and known to the target before submitting to the spell). The condition must be one the target creature would recognize if it was physically present. For example, a bound creature could be released if its gem is stolen, as it would know a theft if it saw one, but couldn't be released when the first brave man touched the gem, since bravery is not so easily defined or detected. Once the condition is met, the target creature is released and must perform a single predetermined task. At the end of this task, the gem turns to worthless dust

and the creature is immediately sent to its home plane. If the described conditions do not occur within the agreed upon timeframe, the creature is automatically set free (leaving the gem undamaged) and returns to its home plane.

The target creature's material body and spirit can be transferred into another nonliving object (such as a gold piece, spellbook, or weapon) by grinding the gem to dust and sprinkling it over the new object. This requires a Spellcraft check with a DC equal to 15 + the bound creature's HD. On a failed check the creature is instead released and may return to its home plane or attack you. This function is often used to bind outsiders to serve as guardians of valuable items. These items are not destroyed as a gem is when the creature bound within is freed and completes its task.

Convincing a creature to submit to a *minimus containment* is incredibly difficult. The length of time that a creature is contained and the conditions of its release determine the Charisma penalty you take when you try to compel it to serve you. The following tables outline the Charisma penalties for a variety of variables.



The difficulty of the task a creature must perform once released does not influence the Charisma penalty except in cases of incredibly difficult or lengthy feats (such as destroying an artifact or tasks that would take multiple years to perform). A bound creature will never agree to perform a task that is impossible for it to succeed at (such as killing a deity or dousing the sun).

Example Condition	Charisma Penalty
Released when any creature touches the gem.	–2
Released when taken to a new city.	–4
Released when the gem's owner falls unconscious.	–6
Released when anyone attempts to perform a major ceremony within a chamber the gem is in.	–8
Released when someone who has stolen the gem is alone.	–10
Released when an elf touches the gem and speaks the name "Tsojcanth."	–12

Time Until Release	Charisma Penalty
24 hours or less	+2
1–6 days	0
1–10 weeks	–2
1 year or less	–4
10 years or less	–8
More than 10 years (no maximum time)	–12

Ultimately, the DM determines the total Charisma check penalty using the totals gained from the relevant charts as a guideline. If you roll a 1 on the Charisma check to compel the elemental or outsider to accept this spell, the target breaks free of its binding and can escape or attack you as normal. Alternatively, if it so wishes, it may trap your soul within the gem used as the focus of this spell and possess your body for a number of days equal to its Hit Dice, as per the spell *magic jar*. At the end of this time the creature leaves your body and may return home or stay on the current plane. Regardless of its decision, you remain trapped within the gem, your body unaffected by *raise dead*, *resurrection*, or similar spells. Only *magic jar*, *miracle*, or *wish* can restore you from the gem back to your original body. If the gem is destroyed while your soul is trapped within you die but can then be raised or resurrected as normal.

Focus: A gem worth at least 100 gp per HD of the target creature.

Torment

Evocation [Evil]
Level: Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 3 rounds
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 24 hours

This spell functions like *dolor*, except that you must know the truename of the creature targeted and your bonus on Charisma checks is +5, +1 per 2 caster levels above 13th. This bonus does not stack with the bonus provided by dolor. Additionally, the target does not attempt to subvert your instructions, instead obeying both the letter and intention of its orders to the best of its ability.

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS™

BY ERIC HADDOCK

art provided by Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Shadow of the Colossus brings you everything you've ever wanted from a problem-solving adventure game: a compelling storyline, romance, and 300-foot-tall creatures capable of squashing whole cities (and suicidal little adventurers). While in the vein of addictive titles like *Zelda* and *Ico*, *Shadow of the Colossus's* focus lies not just on its hero but on its titular monstrosities: Colossi, creatures as epic in deadliness as in size. Inspired by Sony Computer Entertainment's *Shadow of the Colossus* (releasing this month for the Playstation 2), this article presents the colossi in all their titanic terror. But colossi don't need to be merely country-crushing titans, especially when players can control their very own kaiju constructs.

THE STORY

You are merely a boy in love—a love that is in a dire situation. You see, your beloved has lost her soul and strange creatures hold the secrets and materials you need to free her. The problem is that they're 300 feet tall and you'll have to defeat sixteen of them to revive your love.

In *Shadow of the Colossus*, you explore a fantastic world that includes blasted wastelands, gigantic plateaus, geyser fields, ancient forests, and so much more. Somewhere lie the secrets to save your lady fair, and you'll have to solve cunning puzzles in order to make progress on your mission to reunite with your love. But the biggest challenges and most impressive aspect of the game are by far the colossi, gigantic

brutes impervious except for one tiny weak spot. The major problem is often reaching this chink in their natural armor, an Achilles heel that might be several stories off the ground. With rich environments, a muted, moody art style, and enemies of a caliber you've never tackled before, *Shadow of the Colossus* is a vertigo-inducing take on magic and monster hunting, especially when you find yourself on top of one of the mammoth colossi.

PRIMORDIAL COLOSSUS

Colossal Construct
Hit Dice: 54d10+80 (297 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares) or 60 ft. fly (clumsy) or 60 ft. swim
Armor Class: 31 (–8 size, –3 Dex, +32 natural), touch –1, flat-footed 31
Base Attack/Grapple: +40/+75
Attack: Slam +51 melee (4d8+19)
Full Attack: 2 slams +51 melee (4d8+19)
Space/Reach: 50 ft./50 ft. (300 ft. tall)
Special Attacks: Death drop, stomp
Special Qualities: Air armor, construct traits, damage reduction 15/—, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, impassive, low-light vision, thunderous step
Saves: Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +18
Abilities: Str 48, Dex 5, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 5
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 18
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 55–70 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: —

A lonely mountain, miraculously shaped much like a man, towers where it seems there should be no such peak. Then it moves.

A primordial colossus is a 300-foot-tall creature made from the world's flesh and blood, the purest elements and minerals animated by forces beyond mortal comprehension. Its eyes glow with gems and fire, and rivers of water and gusts of air rush up and down its towering frame. Its massive bulk weighs tens of thousands of tons, and valleys form where it steps.

Titanic almost beyond description, primordial colossi are massive constructs and easily among the largest moving things in the world. These creatures have no universal form, although the majority appear like humanoids or natural beasts roughly shaped from the elements. Depending on their appearance, their abilities and modes of locomotion vary, with airborne and sea-bound colossi just as numerous as those that walk on land.

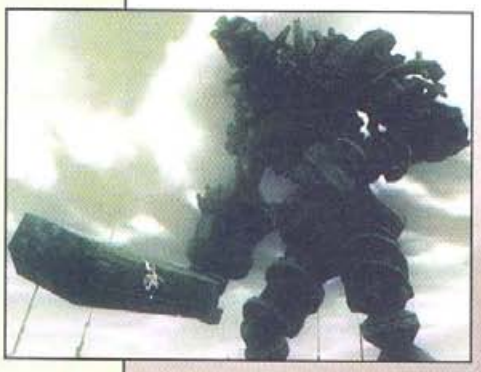
Primordial colossi cannot speak or make any vocal noise, but any druid who can see a colossus can attempt a DC 25 Sense Motive check to empathically discern what has awakened it. For example, a successful Sense Motive check might reveal an overly polluting country or a world-destroying comet, but not specifics on what steps the colossus plans to end the threat.

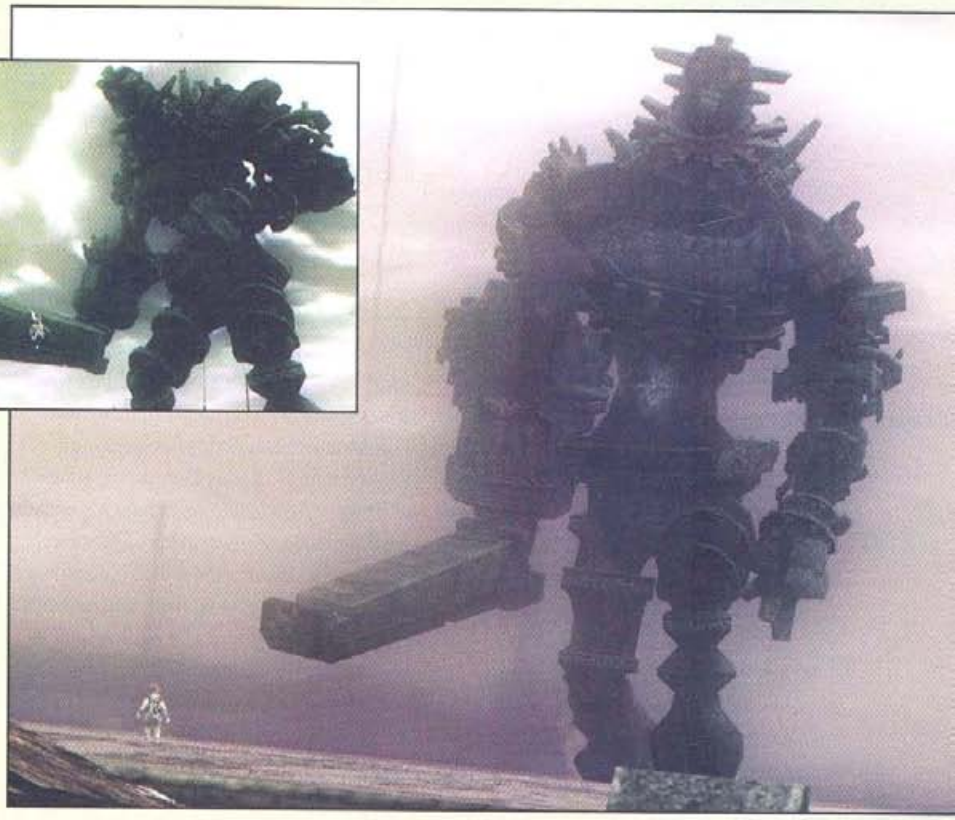
While a few colossi appear in the *Epic Level Handbook*, primordial colossi were formed by the world to protect itself in times of dire need. While far larger than the giant constructs created by some spellcasters, these titanic creatures lack the powerful magical components and directed will of a sole creator. As such, in many ways they are far less potent than the smaller colossal constructs created by mortal wizards.

COMBAT

Rarely purposefully attacking other creatures, the mere passage of a primordial colossus can be a ruinous event. When they do attack, however, these massive constructs lack the intellect to form complex plans, but few tactics could prove more effective than a blow from a primordial colossus's gigantic limbs.

Death Drop (Ex): If a flying or walking primordial colossus is reduced to 0 hit points it falls to the ground in a gigantic pile, much like an avalanche. All creatures within 20 feet of the colossus when it is destroyed are effectively within the bury zone of the falling debris and take 8d6 points of damage, half that amount if they succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save, and are buried. Buried creatures take damage and can be rescued as detailed on page 90 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.





Creatures within 80 feet of the crumbling colossus are in the slide zone and must make a DC 15 Reflex save or take 3d6 points of damage.

Stomp (Ex): By concentrating all its energy on one full-round attack, a walking primordial colossus may stomp upon any foe of less than Colossal size within its threatened area. This attack is treated as a single slam attack that, if it succeeds, is treated as though the primordial colossus had made and succeeded at a grapple check. For every round this grapple is maintained the colossus may deal slam damage to the target as a free action. The target may attempt to escape the grapple every round as normal. Unless the target escapes, this grapple lasts until the colossus moves or decides to release the target. While using this ability a primordial colossus is not considered grappled and still threatens the area surrounding it.

Air Armor (Su): Constructed from all the elements, a column of strong winds surrounds flying and walking primordial colossi at a radius of 30 feet (see page 95 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Strong wind imposes a –2 penalty on ranged attack rolls and Listen checks, as well as knocks down Tiny or smaller creatures.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A primordial colossus is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance.

Impassive (Ex): A primordial colossus will only attack a creature that purposefully deals damage to it first. Creatures daring to approach a primordial colossus can make a DC 20 Climb check. If successful, the creature is capable of grabbing hold of the colossus and riding upon it. If the primordial colossus is stationary when this check is made there is no penalty for failure. However, if the primordial colossus is moving when a creature attempts and fails its Climb check, it is dealt damage equal to the colossus's slam ability.

Thunderous Step (Ex): All creatures smaller than Colossal within 60 feet of a walking primordial colossus when it moves must succeed at a DC 15 Balance check or fall prone.

Awaking a Primordial Colossus

Only the most powerful druids have any hope of manipulating a primordial colossus. Among the most secretive and complex rituals of the oldest druidic circles, awakening a primordial colossus requires numerous taxing undertakings. By far the most difficult of these trials is the search to physically find a primordial colossus. Often well hidden by time, primordial colossi are incredibly difficult to find. Those hoping to awaken one must first research where a colossus lies. A druid who spends a week doing nothing besides researching may make a Knowledge (nature) check to discern a colossus's resting place. The DC for this check is 25 if any colossus is being sought, 30 if looking for a specific type (walking, flying, or swimming), and 35 if the colossus that performed a specific event is being searched for. Failing this check by 10 or more results in unreliable information that might reveal a totally incorrect or unused resting place.

Once a colossus has been discovered, any druid who travels to the creature's location and succeeds at a complex rite can wake the colossus. This ceremony requires the druid to spend an entire week performing the ritual within 100 feet of the colossus. During this time the druid can perform no other action besides eating, sleeping, and preparing spells for use in the ceremony. The ritual involves a variety of rare components totaling 20,000 gp and requires the druid to cast the spells *earthquake, fire storm, foresight, storm of vengeance,* and *whirlwind* every day. At the end of the week, the druid makes a DC 35 Knowledge (nature) check. If he fails, the ceremony goes awry and the material components are ruined. If the druid succeeds, the primordial colossus rises and the druid may issue it one command. The colossus then spends one week attempting to fulfill its order. Upon completing its order or after the passage of one week the primordial colossus again falls inert and cannot be reawakened again for 100 years.

by Andy Collins • illustrated by Niklas Janssen

OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

This month, the Sage steps up to answer questions relating to feats (including several queries regarding the exalted feats in *Book of Exalted Deeds*). If you have questions for the Sage, send them to **sageadvice@paizo.com.**

Can a monk take Improved Natural Attack (*Monster Manual*, page 304) to improve his unarmed strike?

Yes. As stated on page 41 of the *Player's Handbook*, a monk's unarmed strike "is treated as both a manufactured weapon and a natural weapon for the purpose of spells and effects that enhance or improve either," which includes feats such as Improved Natural Attack.

Barring multiclassing, the earliest a monk could take this feat would be at 6th level (due to the base attack bonus prerequisite), at which point her unarmed strike damage would improve from 1d8 to 2d6 (which represents an average increase of +2.5 points of damage). The same monk at 20th level would deal 3d8 points of damage with her unarmed strike.

Can an Order of the Bow initiate (*Complete Warrior*, page 68) use Manyshot (*Player's Handbook*, page 97) in conjunction with his ranged precision class feature?

No. Both of these options require a standard action to use, and thus can't be used in conjunction with one another.

Does Quick Draw (*Player's Handbook*, page 98) allow you to sheathe a weapon as a free action?

No. Quick Draw clearly states that it allows you to "draw a weapon as a free action." Nowhere does it suggest anything about sheathing a weapon more quickly than normal (a move action).

You might be confusing Quick Draw with the ability of any character with a base attack bonus of +1 or better to draw or sheathe a weapon as a free action as part of movement (*Player's Handbook*, page 142). While these functions are similar and overlap to some extent, they are different.

Can a character with Quick Draw and a base attack bonus of +6 or better make a melee attack with one weapon and a ranged attack with another weapon in the same round? What if the melee weapon requires two hands to wield?

Yes. There's nothing inherent in the full attack action that requires all the attacks to be made as the same kind of attack or with the same kind of weapon.

A character with a base attack bonus of +6 or better holding a longsword, for example, could make a melee attack with the longsword (using his full base attack bonus), drop the longsword (a free action), use Quick Draw to draw a dagger (another free action), then throw the dagger (using his base attack bonus –5). If the character had both hands free (for instance, if he didn't carry a light or heavy shield in his off hand), he could even use Quick Draw to draw a bow (free action), draw and nock an arrow (free action) and then shoot the bow (using his base attack bonus –5).

This situation is actually improved if the melee weapon is a two-handed weapon. A character can hold a two-handed weapon in one hand, he just can't attack with it while it's held like that. Thus, he wouldn't even have to drop the weapon in order to draw and throw the dagger. If Krusk the 6th-level barbarian had Quick Draw, he could swing his greataxe (using his full base attack bonus), then leave the axe in his off-hand while drawing a javelin with his primary hand (free action), and finally throw the javelin (using his base attack bonus –5). If Krusk were drawing a ranged weapon that required two hands to use (such as a bow), he'd have to drop his greataxe.

Do you gain the benefits of Weapon Finesse (*Player's Handbook*, page 102) while fighting with two light weapons simultaneously? What if you wield a light weapon and a one-handed weapon (such as a short sword and longsword) simultaneously?

Weapon Finesse applies to all qualified weapons you wield (including all your natural weapons, such as claws) regardless of how many you wield. It doesn't matter if you also wield weapons that don't qualify for the benefit—while the benefit of Weapon Finesse doesn't apply to such weapons, it still applies to any light weapons or other weapons that qualify (such as rapiers).

Can a character wearing heavy armor use Whirlwind Attack (*Player's*

Handbook, page 102)? **A character cannot use Spring Attack (*Player's Handbook*, page 100), a prerequisite for this feat, in heavy armor.**

Just because you're barred from benefiting from a feat doesn't mean that you don't have it anymore. A character incapable of using Spring Attack due to wearing heavy armor still has the feat, and thus still meets the prerequisites for Whirlwind Attack.

Both *Complete Arcane* and *Player's Guide to Faerûn* include a feat named Innate Spell, but the prerequisites and uses per day differ. Which version is correct?

Unless stated otherwise, any time that a rule appears in two different sourcebooks (other than the *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, or *Monster Manual*), the most current sourcebook is considered correct and all previous sources are superseded. A book's credits page lists its publication date (typically near the bottom of the page).

In this case, *Complete Arcane* (published in November 2004) supersedes *Player's Guide to Faerûn* (published in March 2004), and thus its version of Innate Spell should be considered the official version.

The *Book of Exalted Deeds* states on page 39 that exalted feats are supernatural abilities and not extraordinary abilities like other feats. Does that mean that I lose the benefits from my exalted feats in an *antimagic field*?

Correct. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the benefits granted by exalted feats are considered supernatural abilities and thus don't function in areas of antimagic.

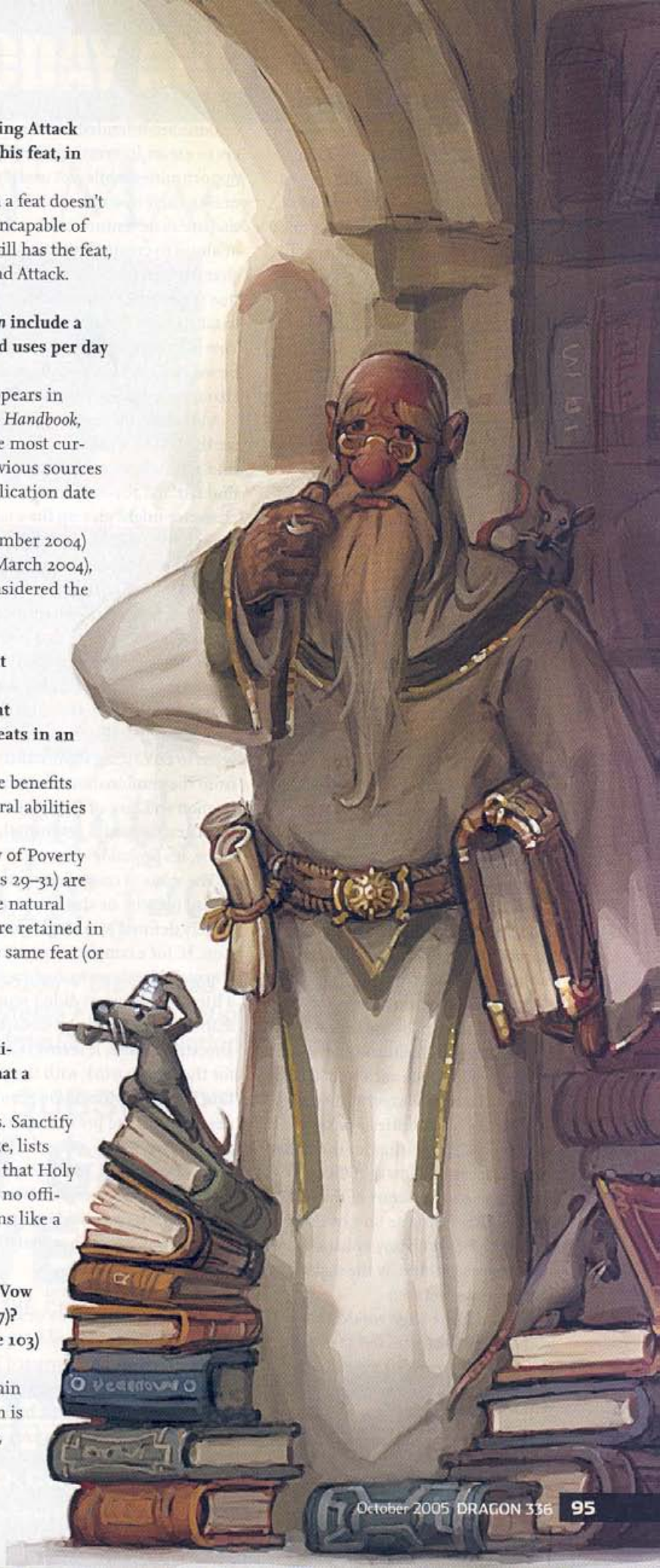
Some of the special abilities granted by the Vow of Poverty (and described under "Voluntary Poverty" on pages 29–31) are specifically described as extraordinary (such as the natural armor bonus gained at 8th level). These abilities are retained in areas of antimagic, even if other abilities from the same feat (or from other exalted feats) are not.

The Holy Ki Strike feat from the *Book of Exalted Deeds* (page 44) lists "Ki strike (holy)" as a prerequisite, but that ability doesn't exist in the book. Is that a typo or is it in a different book?

This looks like an error, as no such ability exists. Sanctify Ki Strike (page 46), a prerequisite for Holy Ki Strike, lists "Ki strike (lawful)" as a prerequisite. This suggests that Holy Ki Strike's prerequisite should be the same. While no official errata for *Book of Exalted Deeds* exists, this seems like a reasonable conclusion for DMs who use the feat.

What exactly is a "pain effect" as described by the Vow of Nonviolence feat (*Book of Exalted Deeds*, page 47)? Would the Pain Touch feat (*Complete Warrior*, page 103) count as a pain effect?

Although Vow of Nonviolence uses the phrase "pain effects" in limiting the character's options, that term is (unfortunately) not defined in the game rules. Thus,



it's up to the DM to determine what effects fall into that category. At the simplest level, the Sage would suggest that any ability whose name includes the word pain, or whose flavor or rules text clearly spell out the infliction of pain, should fall into that category. Examples would include the *symbol of pain* spell ("each creature... suffers wracking pains;" *Player's Handbook*, page 290) and, yes, the Pain Touch feat ("victims... are subject to such debilitating pain").

For example, a monk with Pain Touch who chooses to take Vow of Nonviolence has voluntarily forbidden herself from using her stunning attack against humanoid or monstrous humanoid foes (since her vow requires her to abstain from causing harm or suffering to such creatures), even if the attack itself deals only nonlethal damage.

When in doubt, ask yourself, "does the effect 'have the immediate potential to cause death, suffering, or great harm'" (the definition given in the Vow of Nonviolence feat)? If the answer is yes, the effect is off-limits to the character with Vow of Nonviolence.

Can a kensai (*Complete Warrior*, page 49) select unarmed strike as his signature weapon? If so, does this allow him to take Vow of Poverty while still retaining all the benefits of his signature weapon class feature?

Unarmed strike can be selected as a signature weapon by the kensai. The class feature even includes guidelines for how to adjudicate such a choice (see "Imbuing Natural Weapons" on page 51).

As far as both abilities working together, a strict reading of the rules would appear to allow it. (Of course, the enhancement bonus of the exalted strike ability from the Vow of Poverty wouldn't stack with any enhancement bonus granted by the signature weapon class feature.)

That said, the Sage would fully support any DM who felt this to be an unfair abuse of the spirit of the Vow of Poverty. One of the reasons that *Book of Exalted Deeds* is a "mature audiences" book is that many of its options are intended to allow players to create interesting roleplaying opportunities while not unduly hindering their characters' ability to participate in adventures, not as avenues of abuse to create the most powerful character imaginable. If the DM felt that the kensai in question was trying to take advantage of the wording of Vow of Poverty to subvert its spirit, he'd be well within his rights to disallow the character from selecting the feat.

A better solution, though, would be for the DM to work with the player to find a middle ground that both can find fair and reasonable. As a start, the character might give up the exalted strike benefit of the Vow of Poverty (since he still "owns" a magic weapon, in a manner of speaking, and doesn't need that benefit). If the weapon granted other abilities that overlapped or resembled benefits derived from the Vow of Poverty, it's probably fair for the character to give up those benefits as well. As long as the character doesn't seem to be netting significantly more from the combination of signature weapon and Vow of Poverty than a typical character would get from the vow alone, it's probably okay.

The same is true of any character whose identity or class features are largely defined by a single possession. If, for example, a samurai from *Oriental Adventures* wished to pursue a life of poverty but didn't want to dishonor her family by discarding her ancestral daisho, it seems reasonable for the DM to work with the player to find a reasonable middle ground (as described in the previous paragraph).

How does Vow of Poverty apply to a tattooed monk (*Complete Warrior*, page 82)? Are tattoos considered material possessions or are they more like spell-like abilities?

Despite their physical "presence" on the body, the tattoos of a tattooed monk are class features, not possessions, and thus not restricted by Vow of Poverty in any way (just as a rogue's evasion class feature or a barbarian's fast movement class feature).

Dragon

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by Greg Marks

HERBAL REMEDIES

BARBARIAN

Barbarian tribes have managed to survive for centuries relying only on their oft-impressive muscles and unquenchable rage. These tribes must compete against both more-civilized neighbors and a host of monsters in the wild. They accomplish this task by making use of their environment. A barbarian might not know why an herb helps heal his wounds—as that is the province of druids and the Knowledge (nature) skill—but his Survival skill tells him that chewing on a particular root takes away his pain and under which plant he might find that root.

A handful of nonmagical herbs exist that barbaric societies might utilize in your campaign. Each herb only grows in a particular terrain. An attempt to locate an herb in the appropriate terrain requires 1 hour and a successful Survival check.

Fleshshiver: The tan-colored fleshshiver mushroom grows in the rich soil between the roots of tropical fruit trees. In their efforts to combat the fevers common to the tropics, the tribes of these steamy regions administer pieces of fleshshiver mixed in a cool mud compress to the head of fever victims. Such compresses give a +2 alchemical bonus on Fortitude saving throws made to resist nonmagical diseases and last for one day.

Survival DC 20; warm forest; Market Price 25 gp.

Goldencup: This oily yellow moss gets its name from its habit of growing in low spots on tundra rocks, where small amounts of water collects. Northern tribes have found that chewing dried goldencup moss creates a mild euphoria that strengthens one's resolve. These northern tribes tend to chew goldencup moss immediately before battle, believing it aids them in combat. Chewing this dried moss for 1 minute grants a +2 alchemical bonus on saving throws against fear and compulsion effects (other than the moss's own *confusion* side-effect) for 30 minutes. However, this benefit is not without its perils. As soon as the imbiber enters combat he must succeed on a DC 10 Will save or suffer the effects of the *confusion* spell for the remaining duration of the herb's protection.

Survival DC 25; cold plains; Market Price 50 gp.

Lish Nut: Barbaric mountain tribes have long gathered the nut from the small lish tree. A lish tree grows dozens of tiny nuts in bunches of three to five during the spring. The nut is quite nutritious and a mere handful can provide an entire day's worth of sustenance. In addition, the smell of the lish nut repels most vermin. For 2 hours after eating a nut (which requires a full-round action) the consumer emits the nut's odor, forcing attacking vermin to make a DC 11 Will save or become sickened for 2d4 rounds after touching (such as when making a natural attack) the creature.

Survival DC 10; temperate mountain; Market Price 10 gp.

Tereeka Root: This slim white tuber found in temperate climes has a bitter taste that makes it unsuitable for meals, but warriors greatly value its medicinal properties. Found growing in shaded sandy soils, the tereeka plant's root removes pain and increases the body's natural healing rate. Chewing the root allows the user to remain conscious to –5 hit points and regain hit point damage while resting as though under the care of a trained healer (regaining 2 hit points per level). One dose lasts for 12 hours and takes 1 minute to chew.

Survival DC 30; temperate forest; Market Price 150 gp.

Visma Paste: The dark, broad leaves of the tropical visma bush, when boiled into a thick foul-smelling paste, soothes burns (especially sunburn). The application of visma paste to the skin heals 1d3 points of nonlethal damage to a victim of heat exposure (see page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) and grants a +2 alchemical bonus on the user's next save made to resist further environmental heat damage. If no further saves are required within an hour, the user's body fully absorbs the paste and another dose must be applied.

Survival DC 15; warm marsh; Market Price 30 gp.

by Joshua Cole

BLASPHEMOUS UTTERANCES

BARD

The ineffable horror of the Far Realm touches the artist even more readily than the arcanist. When the two unite, as they do in the bard, unspeakable things writhe into semi-reality and unimaginable words gasp into doleful sound.

Bards succumb readily to alien nightmares, but unlike most spellcasters, they sometimes survive with scraps of their sanity intact. A bard who learns to channel his maddening muses into bardic music gains great and terrible power; for a time, he might even use it for good.

Sooner or later, though, even the noblest-hearted troubadour succumbs to the otherworldly energies unleashed through his music.

BLASPHEMOUS UTTERANCE [BARDIC MUSIC]

Strange whispers and dreadful images sometimes inspire you. They grant your bardic music a terrifying power.

Prerequisites: Bardic music, Perform 9 ranks, Undertone of Heresy.

Benefit: Creatures within 60 feet that can hear you must make a Will save (DC 10 + half your bard level + your Charisma modifier) or be unnerved by the alien tones of your music. The effects of failing the save depend upon the victim's hit dice.

Creatures with fewer Hit Dice than you are panicked, those with an equal number of Hit Dice become frightened, and creatures with up to 3 Hit Dice more than you are shaken. All three effects last for a number of rounds equal to 1d4 + your Charisma modifier.

This is a mind-affecting effect that aberrations are immune to.

If a creature has heard your Blasphemous Utterance in the past week it gains a +2 bonus on its save.

Special: Using this ability counts as one of your daily uses of bardic music. Levels in classes that advance bardic music progression count as bard levels for the purposes of this feat.

SICKENING SONATA [BARDIC MUSIC]

Your Blasphemous Utterance becomes so terribly discordant and unnatural that it makes unprepared listeners physically ill.

Prerequisites: Bardic music, Perform 12 ranks, Blasphemous Utterance, Undertone of Heresy.

Benefit: Your Blasphemous Utterance affects creatures in a more powerful way. Creatures with fewer Hit Dice than you are paralyzed, those with an equal number of Hit Dice become nauseated, and creatures with up to 3 Hit Dice more than you are sickened. All three effects last for a number of rounds equal to 1d4 + your Charisma modifier. This replaces the effect of Blasphemous Utterance. It otherwise functions as that ability.

UNDERTONE OF HERESY

The tones of your music hearken to the alien mindset of the creatures that inspire you.

Prerequisites: Bardic music, Perform 4 ranks.

Benefit: You may spend two bardic music daily uses instead of one. If you do the saving throw DC of your bardic music ability increases by +2.

DARK SPEECH

If you have access to the *Book of Vile Darkness* (a mature audiences sourcebook) replace Undertone of Heresy with the feat Dark Speech (*Book of Vile Darkness*, page 48) and change the prerequisites of Blasphemous Utterance and Sickening Sonata to reflect this replacement.

FROM THE PROS

by Jesse Decker

ESSENTIAL SPELLS 4–6

CLERIC

The previous article From the Pros (see DRAGON #335) talked about cleric spells from levels 1–3 and discussed how a cleric's ability to swap out spells for *cure* spells allowed him to take risks during spell selection. There's no doubt that even an unprepared cleric can get an adventuring party through many challenging encounters just by burning spells, so the real key during spell selection is to make sure that your cleric's spells, when he casts them, have more overall benefit to the party than the simple restoration of hit points. From the spells in the *Player's Handbook* from levels 4–6, there are lots of effective choices.

This advice comes from Jesse Decker, lead developer at Wizards of the Coast and former editor-in-chief of DRAGON.

FOURTH-LEVEL SPELLS

Air Walk: Prepare this, but only cast it if you have to. If your party has another way to take to the air it's better to conserve your spell-power, but if you need to reach a flying foe or deal with some other hazard, it's important to have this spell at your disposal.

Divine Power: This spell is one of the keys to a cleric's ability to stand toe-to-toe with high-CR monsters. Since it has a 1-round-per-level duration, try to find a way to quicken it.

Greater Magic Weapon: Because of its extremely long duration, this spell is a very efficient offensive tool. Remember that although it doesn't stack with other enhancement bonuses, its effects greatly enhance a +1 *flaming sword* or a +1 *holy sword*. This spell is more useful after you attain 12th level. Arcane spellcasters get this spell as a 3rd-level spell rather than a 4th, so if you can convince the wizard to part with a *fireball*, the party spends fewer overall resources on this spell if the wizard is the one passing it out rather than you.

Tongues: If your DM gives full experience for talking your way out of an encounter, keep this spell around so the party's highest Diplomacy bonus can be brought to any potential negotiation. Depending on your DM's style, a scroll might be the right choice.

FIFTH-LEVEL SPELLS

Break Enchantment: This spell's long casting time means that it's a lousy combat spell, but its efficiency is very desirable.

Flame Strike: Although attractive to many clerics, this spell's offense usually isn't very efficient. If you lack a significant ranged attack, however, preparing one or two castings of *flame strike* allows you to hurt monsters on those rounds they're out of reach.

Righteous Might: Depending on your character's build, this spell might be an important piece of offense, but usually *divine power* is more efficient.

Spell Resistance: This spell is mentioned just because *spell resistance* is so often misplayed. Remember that if your ally has *spell resistance* up, she must take a standard action to lower it if you want to heal her without the risk of spell failure.

Wall of Stone: The ability to control the battlefield can be incredibly powerful. Even against foes physically powerful enough to break through it in 1 round or magically powerful enough to teleport past it, slowing down the most powerful monster on the board for 1 round while your companions clean up supporting monsters can shift the tide of battle.

SIXTH-LEVEL SPELLS

Heal: This spell's power is likely obvious. A single, well-timed casting can mean the difference between winning and losing an encounter. Prepare multiple castings.

Greater Dispel Magic: Everything said last month about *dispel magic* applies to this spell, and more. As you increase in level, your opponents' spell effects get more and more detrimental and their buff spells get more and more powerful. Because of this, the ability to remove those effects becomes even more important.

Word of Recall: While this spell is certainly no rival to *greater teleport*, it's extremely powerful. If you have an arcane spellcaster who can whisk the party about with teleportation magic, you needn't prepare this. However, it's good planning to keep a scroll of it around just in case an encounter turns sour.

by William L. Christensen

DARK SIDE DRUIDS

In a typical fantasy campaign, druids fill the role of wise protectors of the woods and are generally benevolent souls. But what happens when druids turn to shadow, walking dark paths that only the worst villains dare tread? Evil druids can make powerful enemies, conducting horrid rituals in the name of prescience and power.

DIVINING WITH SACRIFICES

Sacrifice played a common role in druid rituals of history. Animals (usually bulls or oxen) were the usual victims. Julius Caesar reported that the druids sacrificed great numbers of humans, but archaeological evidence shows that far fewer of these sacrifices occurred than Caesar reported. Of course, in your own game the actual numbers might vary, and an evil sect of druids could very well become a large problem.

Historically, druids sacrificed for many reasons. Doing so opened communication paths with deities, for example, allowing them to foresee the future through their bloody rituals. Such divination involved disemboweling the sacrificial victim and reading the entrails. Characters performing such rituals might gain the favor of some deities, allowing them brief glimpses into the future.

SACRIFICIAL DIVINATION [VILE]

By offering living sacrifices to dark powers you gain insight into the future.

Prerequisite: Sacrificial Mastery [Vile] (see *Book of Vile Darkness*, page 50).

Benefit: You can see glimpses of the future by divining with the entrails of sacrificial victims. Upon doing so, you must make a Knowledge (nature) or Knowledge (religion) check. The result of the check determines which divination spell you emulate. You may apply modifiers from Table 2–1: Typical Sacrifice Elements on page 27 of the *Book of Vile Darkness* to this roll, if any apply. You may always opt to use one of the spells of a DC lower than your check. Using Sacrificial Divination only grants you access to one such spell per day, no matter how many sacrifices you make. All spell effects created by this feat have a caster level equal to your Hit Dice.

Knowledge DC	Effect
10	*augury*
15	*scrying*
20	*divination*
25	*commune*
30	*greater scrying*

In addition, you may add the +4 profane bonus granted by Sacrificial Mastery on Knowledge (nature) checks rather than on Knowledge (religion) checks when performing a divinatory sacrifice.

VILE FEATS

The *Book of Vile Darkness* introduces a new type of feat: the vile feat. Only intelligent creatures of an evil alignment can use vile feats. Vile feats are granted to characters at the behest of a powerful evil agency—a deity, a demon, or something similar. As such, vile feats are supernatural abilities rather than extraordinary abilities. Some DMs might also want to require a character who seeks a vile feat to perform a special ritual or make an actual bargain with a powerful creature of evil. The patron creature may even (at the DM's discretion) have the ability to revoke the feat should the character displease it.

The *Book of Vile Darkness* is for mature audiences only.

WICKER MEN

Perhaps even more sinister than divining with sacrificial victims' entrails, the Celts were said to create enormous replicas of men out of wicker, place sacrificial victims inside of their hollow innards, and set the constructs ablaze. Druids in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS can create these constructs and instill in them a sinister sentience, making them capable killers or guardians. The *Fiend Folio* has full information concerning wicker men.

by Richard Farrese

THE BLACK FIST

This small group of elite warriors is dedicated to the protection of those who hire them. Members of the company enjoy many freedoms, but they must promote and serve the will of its leaders, who decide which clients are worthy of their protection—and which are not.

HISTORY

Thorsen Blackhammer, a dwarf warrior who became famous by saving the lives of many important nobles some four centuries ago, founded the Company of the Black Fist. During his many years of loyal service to rich patrons, Thorsen developed several methods to better defend those he worked for. At the apex of his life, the dedicated mercenary was called the Black Fist in reference to both the name of his clan and his many blued fingers—which never fully healed after being broken multiple times. He named his modest guild for his surname and invited a group of experienced warriors to join its ranks. Thorsen trained them personally and made sure they had what it took to become efficient and perceptive bodyguards. Today, nobles and wealthy merchants across the land recognize the Companions of the Black Fist as the most accomplished and dependable bodyguards one can ever hope to find.

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Companions of the Black Fist are, first and foremost, loyal to one another. When on assignment, a companion behaves cordially, obeys the rules of his employer's household or place of business, and defends his employer and employer's family to the best of his capabilities—at the risk of his own life. Membership in the Company ensures that those who employ a companion treat him fairly and compensate him for his faithful service.

The various guildhalls of the Company serve as gathering points where its members can receive special training and new employment opportunities in the form of various assignments. Companions also receive their pay at the guildhalls, so most members visit the hall to which they belong at least once each month.

MEMBERSHIP

The Company of the Black Fist often seeks to recruit men and women with the potential to become both loyal and efficient bodyguards. Only warriors of non-chaotic alignments are accepted among the Company. Once accepted, a warrior receives special training, allowing him to become a more competent bodyguard.

When a warrior becomes a Companion, he can proudly display the insignia of his guild: A wide Black Fist painted upon a background of the purest white. A Companion receives a sleeveless white tunic displaying the guild's insignia upon its chest, and he is free to wear it as he pleases (even when not on assignment). In many circles, those who bear the sign of the Black Fist are viewed as powerful and competent warriors worthy of respect.

Those seeking membership in the Company of the Black Fist must understand how to protect themselves and others and also how to turn that protection into something more proactive. Prospective members of the Company must be proficient with at least light shields and must possess the Improved Shield Bash feat. Many members also learn Hold the Line, Shield Charge, and Shield Slam from *Complete Warrior*. Lawful members often take one or more levels of the knight protector prestige class.

HIERARCHY AND PROMINENT MEMBERS

Rasmus the Weary is the Grand Marshal of the Company of the Black Fist. A Commander who reports to him leads each of the various guildhalls of the order. A Deputy, in charge of all administrative duty, and several clerks run the daily affairs of each guildhall. Ranks among typical members are serviceman (apprentice), protector (journeyman), defender (master), and captain (grand master).

FIGHTER

by Alejandro Melchor

PRESSURE POINT ATTACKS

A monk with the Stunning Fist feat learns to press her *ki* into her opponents. With the Pressure Point Strike feat, she fine-tunes this ability, sharpening her *ki* into a scalpel that can puncture the lines and nodes of *ki* energy inside a target's body.

PRESSURE POINT STRIKE [GENERAL]

You know how to strike opponents in supernaturally vulnerable locations.

Prerequisites: Dex 13, Wis 13, Knowledge (arcana) 5 ranks, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, base attack bonus +8, *ki* strike (magic).

Benefit: You must declare that you are using this feat, as well as which pressure point you wish to strike, before you make your attack roll (thus, a failed attack roll ruins the attempt). You can use Pressure Point Strike as an attack against an enemy or to remove a detrimental condition from an ally. As an attack, Pressure Point Strike forces a foe damaged by your unarmed strike to make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Wis modifier), in addition to dealing damage normally. A defender who fails this saving throw suffers the effect of the targeted pressure point. This ability only works on giants, humanoids, and monstrous humanoids. Other creature types either lack pressure points or have very different ones.

You can aid an ally by bolstering him in some way or by attempting to remove a detrimental condition. Make a level check against the DC of the effect that caused your ally's condition to remove the condition.

The different uses of this feat count against the number of times per day you can use the Stunning Fist feat in specific amounts.

PRESSURE POINT ATTACKS

The more important a pressure point is, the greater the monk's investment of *ki* to affect it.

White Tiger Array (1 use): A collection of points targeted by the standard use of Stunning Fist, when used on an ally they remove the stunned, sickened, or fatigued conditions.

Red Monkey Point (2 uses): A creature's motor functions depend on this point. Striking here paralyzes your opponent for 1d4 rounds. Used on an ally, it removes paralysis.

Water Turtle Point (2 uses): This point controls a creature's perceptions. Striking here blinds or deafens your foe (your choice) for 1d4 rounds. Utilizing this point removes blindness or deafness from an ally.

Dragon Soul Point (3 uses): A creature's innate resistance to magic channels through this pressure point. Striking here lowers an opponent's spell resistance by 1d6 + your Wisdom modifier for 1 round (but not less than 0). When used on an ally, you can increase his spell resistance (whether natural or granted by a spell or item) by the same amount for 1 round.

Emerald Snake Point (3 uses): This point helps protect a creature from toxins and poisons. By striking this pressure point you can flood your foe's body with internal toxins, poisoning him (injury, Fortitude DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Constitution modifier, initial damage 1d4 Con primary, no secondary damage). For an ally, you can delay the effects of poison for 1d4 hours.

Royal Viper Point (4 uses): This point controls a creature's ability to fight toxins and poisons. Striking here imposes a penalty on the target's saves against poison by 1 + your Wisdom modifier for 1d4 rounds. Touching this point allows you to neutralize poison in an ally.

Celestial Dragon Point (5 uses): This point regulates the flow of spell power. Striking here prevents an enemy from casting spells or using spell-like abilities for 1d4 rounds. When used on an ally, you may attempt to remove a condition caused by a spell or spell-like ability as if using *greater dispel magic*.

MONK

by Chris DeKalb

WHY DO YOU SERVE?

PALADIN

Of all the standard classes, the way of the paladin requires the most from its adherents. A paladin must follow a strict moral code, possess unshakable faith, and have physical power enough to battle the most fearsome fiends. The requirements are tough, the battles difficult, and if they transgress in any way, paladins lose their abilities. Why would anyone chose this path?

In truth deities choose paladins—not the other way around. The chosen possess powerful warrior spirits and pure hearts. For most, they have no other choice in life: they must be a paladin. The following background vignettes present different methods in which your paladin found her calling. Each provides a small bonus that your DM must approve before you integrate it into your character.

CHOSEN

You awoke one evening to find a glowing figure standing over you. "She has chosen you," it said. "You will wield her sword in the name of the light, and she shall bless you for it." With that, the figure spread feathered wings and disappeared in a flash of light. Thenceforth you bore the mark of your deity, creating for you a destiny to perform great deeds in her name as you strive to make a better world.

Suggested Benefit: Being directly chosen by a deity gains you a certain amount of respect from those who share your faith. You have a physical mark of your deity that grants you a +1 bonus on Diplomacy checks made when dealing with a follower of your patron deity (including clerics or other paladins).

FROM THE BADLANDS

You grew up past the Broken Hills, where the king's knights rarely traveled. The village suffered from criminals within and dark creatures without. For the entirety of your childhood your parents told you the good and decent villagers deserved better. Growing into adulthood, you sought ways of making a difference. Shortly after reaching the age of maturity you became the lawgiver for the area and cleaned up your home.

Suggested Benefit: You grew up in the roughest of frontier villages and learned something of the criminal element's mindset. You gain a +1 bonus on Sense Motive made outside of combat.

HERITAGE

Balagar the Pious, who slew the tyrannical red dragon Sylvannicus, begat Boleth. Boleth, who routed the army of Henric the Cruel, begat your faithful grandfather. Your family line has done much to grant honor and glory to your name. Friends of your pious and faithful family say you have blessed blood, while the jealous and petty claim your family has had a long run of luck. Either way, you grew up with the stories of your forefathers, the tales of which taught you that sometimes you must fight for what you believe in. You knew that you could not turn your back on tradition....

Suggested Benefit: Having such a well-recorded family line has provided you with a greater knowledge of the past than your formal studies could account for. You can make Knowledge (history) checks untrained.

VENGEANCE

You were gone when they conquered your village. Enslaving those not slain, the raiders left for parts unknown. You vowed this would never happen again, and since then you have trained to defend the weak and stop those who would prey upon them. No mindless killer or crazed vigilante, you embraced your rage and honed it to a fine point so it could serve you. You seek not revenge, but justice.

Suggested Benefit: Your driving passion makes it difficult for others to beguile you. You gain a +1 bonus on Sense Motive checks against Bluff checks made by opponents attempting to feint in combat.

by Erik Seligman

MYSTIC RANGER

Mystic rangers combine fighting prowess, wilderness survival skills, and magical abilities—like standard rangers. However, a mystic ranger spends more time in prayer and meditation, and is well attuned to the spiritual side of his discipline. Hence, this form of ranger gains spell abilities much sooner, and is able to wield them more effectively than the standard ranger class. In consequence their more combat-oriented abilities are weaker and are learned later.

Alignment: Any non-evil.

MYSTIC RANGER CLASS FEATURES

The mystic ranger is a variant ranger. Unless otherwise noted, a mystic ranger advances in the same manner as a ranger (same Hit Die, base attack bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and so on). When a character elects to take a level of ranger or mystic ranger, he may not later take levels in the other class. This prevents the character from gaining the benefits of a 1st-level ranger twice.

The mystic ranger gains Endurance and his combat style abilities later than the ranger, and gives up the ability to gain an animal companion.

Class Skills: Spellcraft is a class skill for mystic rangers.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A mystic ranger is proficient with all simple weapons, martial ranged weapons, and light armor. A mystic ranger is not proficient with martial melee weapons or shields.

Spell List: The mystic ranger casts 1st- through 4th-level spells from the ranger spell list. His 0-level spell list consists of *create water, cure minor wounds, flare, guidance, know direction, light, mending, purify food and drink, resistance,* and *virtue.* His 5th-level list consists of *awaken, baleful polymorph, cure critical wounds, control winds, summon nature's ally V,* and *wall of thorns.*

THE MYSTIC RANGER

		Spells per Day					
Level	Special	0	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	Track, wild empathy	2	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	1st favored enemy	2	1	—	—	—	—
3rd	Combat Style	2	2	—	—	—	—
4th	Endurance	3	2	1	—	—	—
5th		3	2	2	—	—	—
6th		3	3	2	1	—	—
7th	Woodland stride, Improved Combat Style	4	3	2	2	—	—
8th	2nd favored enemy, swift tracker	4	3	3	2	1	—
9th	Evasion	4	4	3	2	2	—
10th		4	4	3	3	2	1
11th		4	4	4	3	2	2
12th	Combat Style Mastery	4	4	4	3	3	2
13th	Camouflage	5	4	4	4	3	3
14th	3rd favored enemy	5	4	4	4	3	3
15th		5	5	4	4	4	3
16th		5	5	4	4	4	3
17th	Hide in plain sight	5	5	5	4	4	4
18th		5	5	5	4	4	4
19th		5	5	5	5	4	4
20th	4th favored enemy	5	5	5	5	4	4

by Joshua Cole

ROGUE LORE

Live on the streets. Die on the streets. For the urban rogue, the difference between one and the other often boils down to knowing what you can get away with, when, and, most importantly, with whom.

Knowledge is power? Leave that tripe to the wizards in their ivory towers. Knowledge is survival.

STREET SMARTS

While rogues who cling to the thief or thug archetypes get the most use out of Knowledge (local) as it relates to matters criminal, non-traditional rogues require non-traditional knowledge.

Diplomatic rogues focus on a different aspect of local lore. Knowledge (nobility and royalty) covers the peculiarities of court etiquette in foreign climes, but Knowledge (local) fills in the gaps. A diplomat must know how to address a strange monarch respectfully. A great diplomat must know when seeming disrespectful is considered both humorous and appropriate.

Rogues whose involvement in international relations occurs behind the scenes need Knowledge (local) more than perhaps any of their fellows. Those in the espionage business master local knowledge in multiple locations for many reasons, from identifying valuable sources of information to mastering the nuances of local disguise.

Rogues of the wilderness discover some overlap between Knowledge (nature) and Knowledge (local). Their expertise often seems terribly provincial to city folk, but understanding the long-standing local feuds, baronial land disputes, and druidic sect conflicts can save a rogue's life. If she's inclined to involve herself in those clashes, Knowledge (local) provides her with a steady supply of interesting work.

Adventuring rogues who spend most of their time in the antediluvian depths of monster-filled dungeons get the least use out of Knowledge (local). They normally acquire the skill for the sole purpose of finding the best fences on whom to unload excess magic items and other treasures.

UNDERWORLD KNOWLEDGE

Whether they engage in illicit activities or hunt down those who do, many rogues employ the Knowledge (local) skill to get a feel for the criminal element of their homes. Many rogues take even just one rank in Knowledge (local) in order to survive in the criminal underworld without angering the wrong person. Most rogues spend a few days in any new city they enter familiarizing themselves and establishing contacts.

DC 10: You know enough to know you don't want to know more. Most of your information is rumor and hearsay, but you can identify famous alleged criminals, such as a storied assassin or the leader of a major thieves' guild.

DC 15: You recognize important underworld figures, or at least those who allow themselves to be recognized. Your information is mostly accurate—enough at least to keep you from giving offense to the wrong people. You recognize many of the outward signs of illicit activity.

DC 20: You know the basic structure of the major criminal organizations, have a good idea who runs which operations and how they interact, and know who to go to for more information. You can reliably identify all manner of roguery if you get the chance to observe it.

DC 25: Your knowledge of the underworld is both extensive and reliable. You know the important figures of the major criminal cartels and how they structure their organizations. You even know many of the secret patrons and sponsors who benefit from illicit behavior.

DC 30: If a legitimate merchant fenced stolen goods for the thieves' guild two years ago, you know who he was, what he sold, who he sold it to, and for whom he sold it. You know who gets a cut from petty thieves and who ordered the assassination of the mayor. Your knowledge of criminal activity is astonishing, if not downright disturbing.

by Hal Maclean

POLTERGEISTS

SORCERER

The magic lives inside sorcerers. It emerges in sparkling motes of power or dazzling bursts of energy that both terrify and delight. For the child destined to become a sorcerer magical outbursts promise greater things to come. Long before they learn to control their power would-be sorcerers plague their households with the unexpected and the unexplained. Called poltergeists ("noisy ghosts") by some scholars, this untamed magic leaves many parents fearful of restless spirits.

Sometimes a sorcerer never learns to fully control these first flashes of mystical energy and manifests his poltergeists even as an adult. Such a sorcerer lacks some of the flexibility of his comrades but gains unique abilities in exchange. A sorcerer character must choose to have a poltergeist at 1st level and must give up two 0-level spells. These lost spells mean the poltergeist-plagued sorcerer begins play with just three 0-level spells instead of five. In addition, the chosen spells cannot later be learned by the sorcerer. In a sense, the sorcerer has access to the chosen spells but they manifest in a different way. The exact nature and effect of a given poltergeist depends upon the spells that underpin it. The poltergeists shown here are merely the most common. Many others exist.

Crawling Coins (Su): (Spells lost: *prestidigitation* and *open/close.*) Your first word likely being "Mine," your loathing of sharing somehow gives life to small objects on your person, sending them scuttling away from those hoping to take them from you. You may use Sleight of Hand to conceal objects on your body even if you put no skill ranks in it. Further, anyone attempting to use Sleight of Hand to take something from you suffers a –4 penalty.

Fanfare (Su): (Spells lost: *dancing lights* and *ghost sounds.*) Perhaps coddled a bit too much as a child, you feel a sense of uniqueness and entitlement that causes you to enter rooms amidst a flourish of glorious sounds and pyrotechnics. You may, as a conscious act of will similar to holding your breath, suppress this ability, allowing you to sneak into a room. Doing so, however, leaves you feeling strangely diminished. When you permit this ability to function normally you gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy or Intimidate checks for an hour against anyone who witnesses your spectacular entrance.

Frost Fingers (Su): (Spells lost: *ray of frost* and *touch of fatigue.*) Often belabored for your clumsiness as a child, it sometimes seems as if your merest touch causes objects to shatter and crack. Whenever you first touch an object with a hardness of 2 or less it must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + Charisma modifier) or take damage equal to your Charisma modifier. This damage ignores hardness. If the item makes its saving throw or endures the damage you may handle it normally thereafter.

That'll Leave a Mark! (Su): (Spells lost: *acid splash* and *arcane mark.*) Called a bully by many, the secret satisfaction you gained from making playmates cry "uncle" somehow caused you to leave a record of their submission visible to all. Whenever you successfully strike an opponent with an unarmed attack or touch attack she must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + Charisma modifier) or develop a bruise in a shape you desire in the area you struck. This bruise heals normally in a week and is removed by any amount of magical healing.

The Pinch (Su): (Spells lost: *flare* and *mage hand.*) A solitary and eccentric child, often targeted by bullies with rocks or rotted food, you developed a minor but effective way of distracting your tormentors. Once per day as a standard action you can target a spellcaster concentrating on a spell and force the spellcaster to succeed at a Concentration check (DC 15 + spell level of spell being concentrated on) or lose the spell. This disrupting effect cannot be used on a spell as it is being cast.

by Hal Maclean

DARK PACTS

Older then the gods, enemies of time and space, some entities lurk just beyond the edge of reality waiting for their moment to return. Yet for those with the hubris to face these creatures, to strike up a pact with the enemies of the firmament itself, they offer staggering power. They demand in exchange a price that might, at first glance, seem quite reasonable indeed.

These rituals, represented as feats, require the wizard to contact and forge a dark pact with one of the elder beings supplanted by the creation of the current multiverse. Each pact requires both the ability to prepare a specific spell and to make a sacrifice to the dark, unknown entity.

BETRAYAL OF THE SPIRIT LINKED [GENERAL]

A being of pure malice and darkness seduced you into the ultimate treachery: you murdered your own familiar. Now a twisted, undead mockery walks in its place.

Prerequisites: Ability to prepare and cast *animate dead*, required sacrifice.

Sacrifice: You must kill your own familiar and animate it as either a zombie or skeleton (your choice). Due to the intervention of your patron you suffer none of the ill effects normally incurred by the death of a familiar. Even if you subsequently repent and try to summon a new familiar only another undead creature answers your call.

Benefit: Your familiar gains either the zombie or skeleton template. Its abilities and qualities alter to conform with the template (see pages 225 and 265 of the *Monster Manual*). You no longer gain the special ability it once granted you (such as the +3 on Listen checks granted by a bat) and as a mindless undead it never develops the speak with master or speak with animals of its own kind abilities. However, you gain the ability to draw upon its supernatural vitality when it is within arms reach. A skeleton familiar grants you DR 5/bludgeoning and a zombie familiar grants you DR 5/slashing.

Special: A wizard may select Betrayal of the Spirit Linked as a wizard bonus feat (see page 57 of the *Player's Handbook*).

EXCISED FROM THE WEB OF LIFE [GENERAL]

A being spun out of madness has granted you the power to make the children of nature quail, but now you must endure their loathing.

Prerequisites: Ability to prepare and cast *blight*, required sacrifice.

Sacrifice: You suffer a penalty equal to your level on all Charisma-based skills and checks when dealing with creatures of the animal, fey, and plant types as well as anyone with the wild empathy class ability.

Benefit: Whenever you successfully cast a spell upon any creature of the animal, fey, or plant type you may choose to deal damage equal to your caster level to the target, even if the spell does not normally deal damage. If the spell cast allows a saving throw and the target succeeds it takes no damage from this ability. If the spell cast does not allow a saving throw the target can make a Fort save to negate this damage.

Special: A wizard may select Excised From the Web of Life as a wizard bonus feat.

VERMINOUS GRAFT [GENERAL]

The darkness spoke to you, and to your eternal regret you listened, plunging your hand into a nest of stinging, crawling insects.

Prerequisites: Ability to prepare and cast *contagion*, required sacrifice.

Sacrifice: You must give up the normal usage of one of your hands, making it home to a colony of insects likes ants or termites. You may no longer use two-handed weapons or equipment. Further, the sight of your hand inspires fear and loathing in all who see it, imposing a –4 penalty on all Charisma-based skills or checks, except Intimidate, for which you instead gain a +2 bonus. This penalty also applies to any skill that requires both hands to use (such as Climb, Open Lock, or Use Rope).

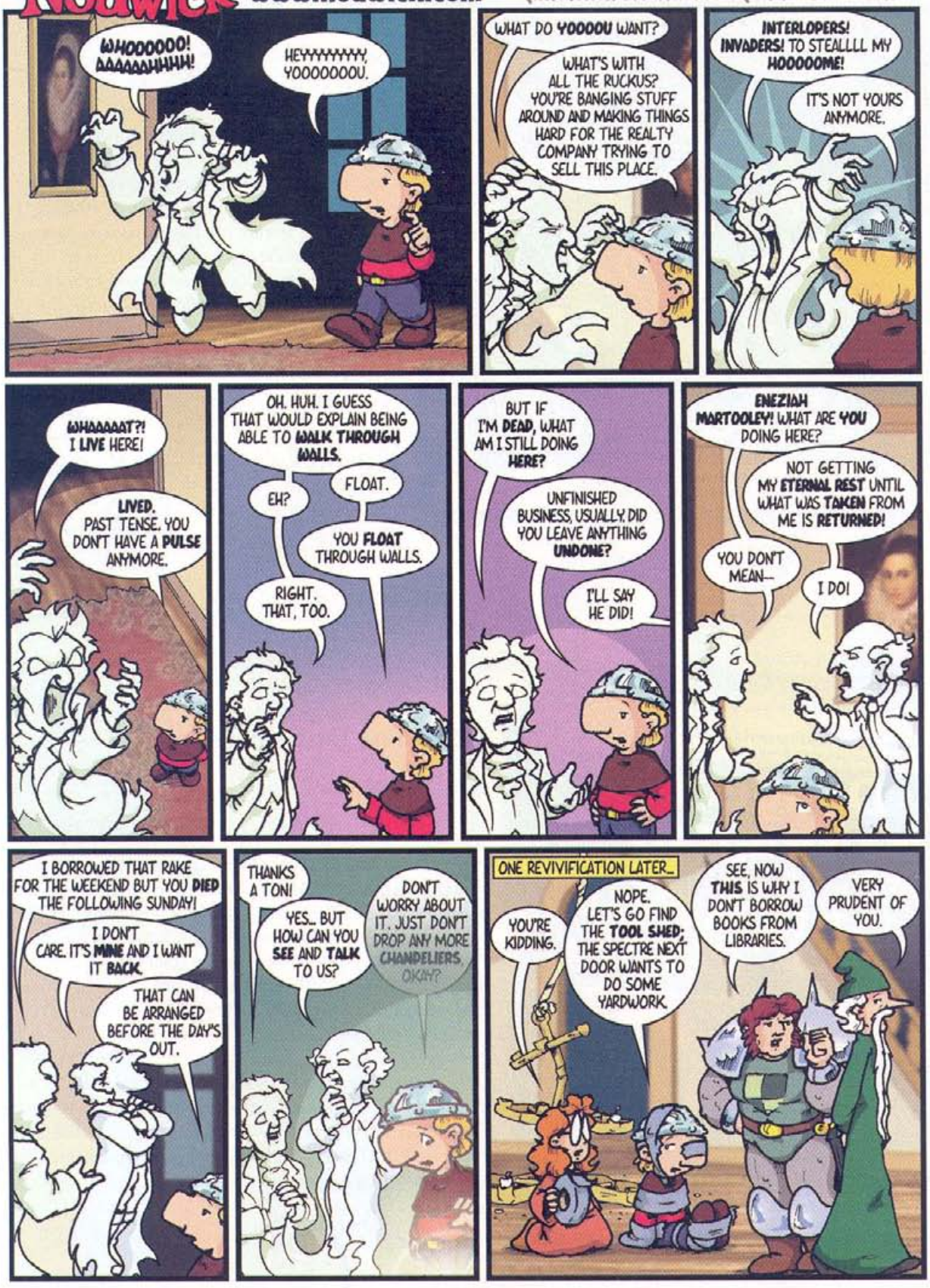
Effect: You may, as a standard action, make a melee touch attack with your vermin-covered hand. This attack deals 1d6 points of damage + your Intelligence modifier. In addition, you are always considered armed for the purpose of making or avoiding attacks of opportunity.

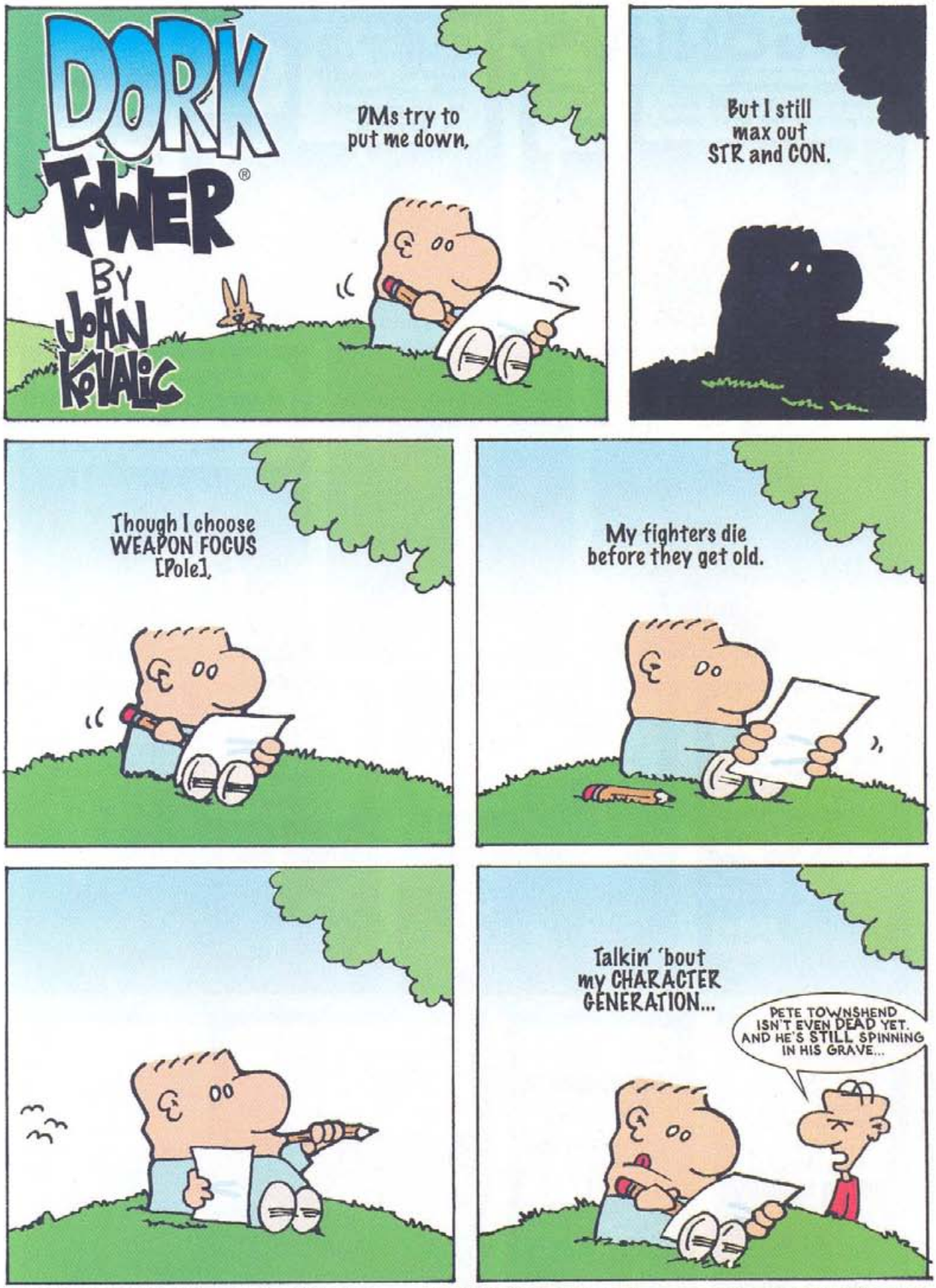
Special: A wizard may select Verminous Graft as a wizard bonus feat.

Nodwick

by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

Science Fiction is no more written for scientists than ghost stories are written for ghosts. - Brian Aldiss


WHOOOOOO! AAAAAAHHHH!
HEYYYYYYYY, YOOOOOOOU.
WHAT DO YOOOOU WANT?
WHAT'S WITH ALL THE RUCKUS? YOU'RE BANGING STUFF AROUND AND MAKING THINGS HARD FOR THE REALTY COMPANY TRYING TO SELL THIS PLACE.
INTERLOPERS! INVADERS! TO STEALLLL MY HOOOOOME!
IT'S NOT YOURS ANYMORE.
WHAAAAAT?! I LIVE HERE!
LIVED. PAST TENSE. YOU DON'T HAVE A PULSE ANYMORE.
OH. HUH. I GUESS THAT WOULD EXPLAIN BEING ABLE TO WALK THROUGH WALLS.
EH?
FLOAT.
YOU FLOAT THROUGH WALLS.
RIGHT. THAT, TOO.
BUT IF I'M DEAD, WHAT AM I STILL DOING HERE?
UNFINISHED BUSINESS, USUALLY. DID YOU LEAVE ANYTHING UNDONE?
I'LL SAY HE DID!
ENEZIAH MARTOOLEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
NOT GETTING MY ETERNAL REST UNTIL WHAT WAS TAKEN FROM ME IS RETURNED!
YOU DON'T MEAN--
I DO!
I BORROWED THAT RAKE FOR THE WEEKEND BUT YOU DIED THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY!
I DON'T CARE. IT'S MINE AND I WANT IT BACK.
THAT CAN BE ARRANGED BEFORE THE DAY'S OUT.
THANKS A TON!
YES... BUT HOW CAN YOU SEE AND TALK TO US?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. JUST DON'T DROP ANY MORE CHANDELIERS, OKAY?
ONE REVIVIFICATION LATER...
YOU'RE KIDDING.
NOPE. LET'S GO FIND THE TOOL SHED; THE SPECTRE NEXT DOOR WANTS TO DO SOME YARDWORK.
SEE, NOW THIS IS WHY I DON'T BORROW BOOKS FROM LIBRARIES.
VERY PRUDENT OF YOU.


DORK TOWER®
By JOHN KOVALIC
DMs try to put me down,
But I still max out STR and CON.
Though I choose WEAPON FOCUS [Pole],
My fighters die before they get old.
Talkin' 'bout my CHARACTER GENERATION...
PETE TOWNSHEND ISN'T EVEN DEAD YET. AND HE'S STILL SPINNING IN HIS GRAVE...

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HTTP://WWW.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/USERS/MUSKRAT_JOHN

ZOGONIA
BY TONY
I NEED SOMEONE TO CLIMB DOWN THAT LADDER AND SCOUT-OUT THE NEXT ROOM.
I DID THE LAST ROOM.
KEV, STEPPING INTO AN ALCOVE TO RELIEVE YOURSELF DOES NOT COUNT AS SCOUTING-OUT A ROOM !!
WHY NOT?
I'LL GO.
THE DANG SKY WOULD CRACK OPEN IF KEV EVER RISKED HIS SKIN.
TONY MOSELEY © 2005 WWW.ZOGONIA.COM
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN, DWARF ?!
QUIET, KEV. THERE MAY BE MONSTERS SLEEPING.
TAP TAP TAP
YO! MONSTERS!! I'M TASTY DWARF-MEAT !!! COME EAT ME !!! YUMMY YUM YUM!
DANG IT! YOU WOKE-UP A BUNCH OF MINOTAURS! I'M GONNA STOMP YER FACE INTO MUD, KEV!!!
SNORT
MOOH?
SNORF
YOU BETTER FOLLOW ME DOWN THE LADDER TO HELP DINDIL !!
I WILL! I WILL!
KEV, HURRY! THERE ARE ELEVEN OF THEM! YAAAAH!
ELEVEN? UM... UM..
OH NO! WOLVES ARE ATTACKING ME UP HERE!
CLANG CLANG STAB..!!
OOF! THEY'RE EVERYWHERE! I'LL BE DOWN AS SOON AS I RUN THEM OFF !! TAKE THAT!!! AND THAT!!
AWOOOOO!!
GRR GRRR
huh?
HOW IS IT THAT YOU THREE MORONIC ADVENTURERS ARE LAYING WASTE TO MY ENTIRE DUNGEON? HOW IS IT POSSIBLE !!
HEY! .... DOES THIS DUNGEON HAVE A ROOM FULL OF BEER? ...WE RAN-OUT AN HOUR AGO.